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PERSONAL IMMORTALITY

AN ENQUIRY INTO THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF A FUTURE LIFE

BY

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"Non est ad astra mollis e terris via."—SENECA.

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TO

MY WIFE

PREFACE

No apology is needed for attempting an enquiry into the Christian doctrine of a future life. The methods used here may appear inadequate and the conclusions arrived at insufficient. Each reader must judge of these matters for himself. But the importance of the subject cannot be overestimated. The author can at least claim to possess a sincere desire to arrive at the truth, so far as that is possible for human minds. If any thought in the following pages arouses interest in the mind of the reader, he is advised to pursue the subject for himself. If any fault becomes apparent, he is asked to attribute it solely to the author and not to be deterred from his quest for the truth by an imperfect presentation, either in this volume or any other. In a subject like immortality enquiry is difficult and finality impossible. But the quest is well worth while, as all who undertake it honestly soon discover.

Grateful thanks are extended to two personal friends, Revs. G. R. H. Shafto and F. Bertram Clogg, the former having read the manuscript and the latter the proofs. Several valuable suggestions

were also made by Rev. Hugh Martin, whose courtesy and consideration it is impossible to pass by without acknowledgement. But for the kindly pressure of several friends at Munster Park and the generous assistance of those named above, these chapters would not have found their way into print.

A. G. J.

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" . . . And I look for the Resurrection of the dead, And the life of the world to come."—NICENE CREED.

INTRODUCTION

PERSONAL IMMORTALITY

INTRODUCTION

HUMAN immortality is one of those perplexing problems about which certainty seems unattainable. Perhaps for this reason it has a lasting fascination for the human mind. We cannot dismiss it if we would. Even those who appear to be indifferent to any doctrine of the hereafter often fly to some unworthy superstition to take its place. Others who take an agnostic attitude to the question do so not through any lack of interest, but because of the extreme difficulty of arriving at the actual facts.

What are the facts? Indeed, are there any facts upon which we may depend? Is immortality the dream-child of human longing or is it the legitimate offspring of right thinking? Are we the victims of our own emotions or have we reasonable ground for belief in a life after death? Are the traditions we have inherited from the past but "the baseless shadows of a wistful human dream,"* or is there a reality behind the dream?

To answer these questions fully would involve a

* Robert Blatchford, *God and My Neighbour.*

careful and critical investigation into all the evidence that has any bearing on the subject. History would have to be examined in order to discover what past generations have thought and said. Science would have to be questioned for any discoveries, especially of recent date, that might throw light upon the problem. Religion would have to be asked whether she had any worthy contribution to make to the discussion. Above all, the teaching of the Christian Church would have to be subjected to the most careful scrutiny. Finally, it would be necessary to ascertain whether reason and faith combined could provide a sufficient foundation upon which a sure doctrine of the hereafter could be built. These are the demands made by the present age, and they are not unjust.

Such a thorough and scientific investigation, however desirable, is obviously beyond the scope of this present volume. It is doubtful, indeed, if it could be accomplished by any one man, no matter how wise he might be. What is attempted here is an enquiry into the Christian position and a brief examination of the grounds upon which it is based. Our main purpose will be to remove certain misconceptions that stand in the way of a clear apprehension of the truth, rather than to argue exhaustively about the whole question of eternal life.

In thus limiting the range of our investigation to Christianity, no disrespect is thereby implied to

her beliefs. It is true to say, however, that the hristian doctrine of immortality contains most, if ot all, of the best features of other systems, and in ddition, possesses certain distinctive characteristics its own. Whether it meets every human need ch one must decide for himself. The justification r approaching the whole problem from this point view lies in the fact that the claim for a future life made by religious men on religious grounds. mmortality is indeed deep-rooted in the religious onsciousness, and therefore it is mainly to religion at we ought to look for its explanation.

I

DREAMS OF IMMORTALITY

"If a man die, shall he live again?"—Job xiv. 14.

I

DREAMS OF IMMORTALITY

EFORE dealing with the question of the hereafter om a specifically Christian standpoint there are veral preliminary considerations that it may be ell to take into account. First in order, though rhaps not in importance, is the fact that man has ways desired immortality. After this fashion or at, in one manner or another, he has always eamed of a world to come. Christianity is in no nse responsible for that desire. It lived in the arts of men centuries before Jesus was born. As on as man arrived at any real consciousness of mself some conception of a hereafter began to rm within his mind. Germs of these ideas may traced even in the earliest animistic cults. Mr. rant Allen, writing for the Rationalist Press, clares that the conception of the life of the dead an element in religion that is "older, more funda- ental and more persistent than any mere belief in god or gods"* and is, in fact, "the earliest ng" to appear in religion at all. Although this iter seems to imagine that in thus tracing the

* Grant Allen, *The Evolution of the Idea of God.*

craving for immortality back to primitive origins h
has disposed of the whole matter, he has in realit
but demonstrated how basic this instinct is.

Neither are these dreams of immortality confine
to crude and superstitious minds. The primitiv
savage may have jumped to certain conclusion
without any justification, but with the growth
knowledge the eternal hope has not been quenche
On the contrary, the spiritual and intellectual gian
of the race display a remarkable unanimity in the
hope of a hereafter. Men like Socrates and Plat
Zoroaster, the philosophers of India and the sag
of China have all agreed in looking for a life beyon
the grave. It is of course true that there have bee
a number of sincere and clear-minded men who hav
come to the conclusion that death is the end of a
and that there is nothing beyond. But even in thes
cases they have not always succeeded in crushin
the deep and underlying desire of their nature
though they have been unable intellectually
concede a life to come. Huxley, who denie
immortality, wrote in 1883 to John Morley:

"It is a curious thing that I find my dislike to th
thought of extinction increasing as I get older an
nearer the goal. It flashes across me at all sorts
times with a sort of horror that in 1900 I sha
probably know no more of what is going on than
did in 1800. I had sooner be in hell a good deal.'

* John Viscount Morley, *Recollections*.

Herbert Spencer, as he grew old, was admittedly disturbed by the thought that death put an end to Nature's delights of ear and eye, the conclusion to which his philosophy had led him. He wrote in 1902:

> After contemplating the inscrutable relation between brain and consciousness, and finding that we can get no evidence of the existence of the last without the activity of the first, we seem obliged to relinquish the thought that consciousness continues after physical organisation has become inactive. But it seems a strange and repugnant conclusion that with the cessation of consciousness at death, there ceases to be any knowledge of having existed." *

So even those who have strenuously denied life after death bear witness to the passionate longing of mankind for immortality. When religion denied it to them, as in the case of the primitive Hebrews, men sought relief in magic and necromancy. When reason seemed to repudiate it, they trifled with "The Grand Perhaps":

> "And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears
> As old and new at once as Nature's self,
> To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
> Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,
> Round the ancient idol, on his base again,
> The grand Perhaps. . . ." †

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* John Viscount Morley, *Recollections*.

† Robert Browning, *Bishop Blougram's Apology*.

The universal cry of the soul of man, to which the finest thinkers of the ages bear witness, has been well expressed in the following words:

"O God, if we are not to meet there, if those who are gone from us are but a mockery and lost in everlasting nothingness, wherefore hast Thou created us at all?"

Before attempting to estimate the evidential value of these human desires, we must take into account a second fact, which is closely allied to the first. Man is never satisfied with this life, nor does it seem as if he ever will be. It is common enough to remark that earthly ambitions and material possessions do not give contentment. But dissatisfaction is by no means confined to these things. It manifests itself even more strongly in the higher realms of beauty, truth and love. The artist never succeeds in capturing the spirit of beauty. The scientist is always conscious that a vast sea of knowledge stretches away into the infinite distance. All men have cravings for love, joy and peace that somehow this world seems too poor to satisfy. Man dies discontented with the very best that this present existence is able to give. This also would appear to be a factor in the case, which we cannot altogether ignore.

In making an endeavour to discover the relation that these human instincts bear to the question

under discussion, it must be frankly admitted that the existence of a universal desire, even when it is coupled with a universal dissatisfaction, is no proof whatever of immortality. To jump to the conclusion that immortality is a fact because men desire it, or to postulate a world to come because this life seems insufficient, is to allow our feelings and emotions to get the better of our reason. What if the universe be a cheat and there is no reality to correspond with the dreams of men? We cannot overlook this possibility. Again, it may be that human dissatisfaction is a race-instinct implanted in human nature for the purpose of assisting in the evolution of mankind, for if the race were to attain satiety all development would cease and men would perish from the face of the earth. This may not be the true explanation but it has to be taken into account. What we have to do is to get behind these instincts and make an effort to discover the source from which they come. If it be true, as Christianity asserts, that a good God exists, from Whom all life springs, then it may not be altogether unreasonable to infer that He would hardly have implanted longings in the hearts of His children that He is not prepared to satisfy. But at this stage we dare not make so tremendous an assertion. The immediate task before us at the moment is that of gathering together the available facts, without attempting to build an argument upon

them, yet taking care that they are not forgotten. That men desire immortality is not unimportant. That this life fails to satisfy is a consideration that ought not to be utterly ignored. If on other grounds a future life appears to be reasonable, then our longings for that life become reasonable also. On the other hand, if the idea of immortality can be proved to be false, then we must seek some other explanation which will fit in with all the facts.

Leaving this matter as it stands for the present, the next consideration of importance is the changed attitude of science and philosophy to the whole question of a spiritual universe. A comparatively short time ago, the argument for materialism seemed almost invincible. Consciousness was regarded as an expression of molecular changes that take place in nervous matter that in itself is the organ of consciousness. Thought was held to be a function of matter, or at any rate, inseparably bound up with the activity of the brain and nervous system. The basis of the universe was conceived to be matter, of which the atom was the smallest particle. The whole physical and chemical science of the nineteenth century was founded upon the atom, the indivisibility of which was taken for granted. But the case stands very different now. The theory of electrons has altered the scientific conception of the foundations of the universe and opened the door to endless speculations as to the nature of matter itself

There are very few modern scientists of any eminence who would be prepared to deny flatly the possibility of a spiritual basis for the universe as we know it. Psychological research has also made rapid strides. Thus it has come about that a new value has been given to "Mind," and the spiritual side of life has attained a new significance. The old view of the relation between mind and brain has been largely modified, if not superseded.

The modern scientific attitude is fairly represented by a writer in a recently published volume entitled *The Outline of Science,* who deals thus with the relation between body and mind:

"By no jugglery with words can we get Mind out of Matter and Motion. And since we are in ourselves quite sure of our Mind, we are probably safe in saying that in the beginning was Mind. This is in accordance with Aristotle's saying that there is nothing in the end which was not also in kind present in the beginning—whatever we mean by beginning."*

This is exceedingly important for our present subject, because if it be conceded that it is at least possible for the universe to have a spiritual, or perhaps we ought to say, a non-physical basis, and if Mind can be proved to be fundamentally distinct from Matter, it follows that the spiritual instincts of

* *The Outline of Science,* vol. i., edited by Professor J. Arthur Thomson.

mankind are not necessarily physical in their origin, and that we have therefore to look for some ultimate spiritual reality from which they are derived. Further, it opens the door to the possibility of the human mind functioning apart from the body. From a strictly scientific standpoint, and after careful argument, one modern writer, himself no mean authority in these matters, reaches the following interesting conclusion :

"We have now crossed the great gulf between the physiological and the psychical, and have set our feet firmly on that shore where the higher faculties of the mind, reason and abstract thought, are subsequently developed. These higher powers serve only to point us still further along the road that delivers us from bondage to the flesh, and leads us to anticipate the complete emancipation of the mind from the body. The mind may henceforth become indifferent to the disasters which in the course of nature are bound to overtake the body, and may hope to survive its destruction and decay—and perhaps thereafter to find or create for itself a "spiritual body" adapted to a different sphere of existence and to other modes of life."*

We must be careful to observe that the "spiritualistic" attitude of modern science does not warrant us in accepting this writer's anticipa-

* Essay on "The Mind and the Brain," by J. A. Hadfield (*Immortality*, edited by B. H. Streeter).

tion as a fact. It merely delivers him, and others whose thinking travels along similar lines, from the charge of being opposed to reason.

The changed attitude in modern thought is also reflected even more strongly in the realm of philosophy. The quest of the Absolute has been delivered from the necessity of making concessions to materialism that formerly hampered its progress. The Ultimate Reality has come to be conceived in terms that are warmer, more personal, or to be accurate, less impersonal, than formerly. We cannot go into such a large question here, but it will be admitted by anyone familiar with modern philosophic thought that idealistic interpretations of the universe, and the implications that follow therefrom, are more readily accepted now than in the last generation. One writer goes so far as to say :

"The upholders of a spiritualistic philosophy may fairly be said to have confuted naturalistic or mechanistic interpretations of the world,"*

and quotes in support of his contention the following statement :

"The impossibility of a complete mechanical system of the universe has been brought out in the work of Dr. James Ward,† and may perhaps be

* Essay on "Christian Faith and Present-day Thought," by H. Maldwyn Hughes, D.D. (*The Chief Corner-stone*, edited by W. T. Davison, D.D.).

† *Naturalism and Agnosticism.*

regarded as one of the few points that have been definitely established in metaphysical theory."*

These considerations, however important, must not be taken as suggesting that immortality can be proved or even demonstrated purely from a scientific or philosophic standpoint, even though science or philosophy may appear to be not unfavourable to it. But the utter unreason of a belief in a future life has at any rate been disproved. There now exists a large mental background with which the claim for immortality does not conflict. Further than that we have no right to go.

At this preliminary stage we ought also to notice one particular aspect of psychological enquiry that is arousing considerable interest and that would appear to have a bearing upon the problem before us. Arising from the ranks of science there is a growing body of eminent men who declare that they now possess sufficient evidence to prove that mind does exist apart from matter and that phenomena have occurred indicating that human personality survives the shock of death. These men affirm that psychical research has proved that messages have been received from those who have suffered bodily dissolution. Had the Church made this claim it would have been laughed out of court. The strange thing is that, generally speaking, ecclesiastics have actually refused even to consider

* McKenzie, *Outlines of Metaphysics.*

the evidence. Some have not hesitated to denounce the whole of psychical research as being evil and wrong. That attitude at least cannot be right. The Church should be the very first to welcome enquiry on this or any other question.

A clear distinction must here be made between what is known as spiritualism, or more correctly "spiritism," and psychical research. The former is a semi-religious cult based upon the practice of communication with the dead. The latter is a properly conducted enquiry into certain phenomena which appear to have occurred within the domain of the natural order. It is doubtful whether spiritism has anything to give to those who accept the implications of the Christian faith, and on the face of it would seem to encourage superstition in the minds of those who reject Christianity. Sir William Barrett says:

"I should rather dissuade uninstructed persons from resorting to mediums than encourage them to do so. Even those who yearn to pierce the veil for 'The touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still' would, in my opinion, if they have not Christian faith, do better to rest content with a perusal of the evidence for survival that is now being laboriously accumulated by expert enquirers . . . rather than to experiment for themselves."*

* Sir William Barrett, F.R.S., *On the Threshold of the Unseen.*

Of that warning we may well take heed. It is prompted, not by loyalty to any religious dogma, but by the cautious scientific temper. Spiritism is for the most part an ignorant dabbling in matters that ought properly to be left in the hands of skilled investigators. No ordinary man would dream of experimenting for himself in the spheres of surgery and medicine. Quacks exist, it is true, and sometimes they hit upon the truth by accident. But the general sense of the community disregards them. We leave research to the experts, and it is right that we should do so. Then when results come we can make use of them for the healing of body or mind.

The same course should be taken in regard to psychical research. In such a subject the dangers are great, and ignorance can do untold harm. As we entrust investigation in other branches of scientific enquiry to certain picked men, who are trained for the purpose, so we should be prepared to do in this matter. But the ordinary man can take heed of the results. He may learn from them. He may work out the implications of those results and estimate their value for human thought and action.

What are the results that have been arrived at by the methods of psychical research? At least two may be regarded as practically certain. First, there is no doubt that direct messages have been "tele-

athically" received from the dying by friends ving at a distance and in some cases apparitions ave been seen, which, though not necessarily pos- essing objective reality, have none the less been roved to have been veridical. That has been lefinitely proved by an overwhelming accumulation f verifiable evidence. It would seem as if those bout to die have the power of impressing their houghts upon their loved ones more clearly and urely than when in normal health. Second, there s no doubt that communications have been received by the living conveying knowledge that was not in heir conscious minds, and that apparently came rom those who had "passed over." The researches of Mr. Gerald Balfour* and others in this depart- ment of enquiry are especially noteworthy.

It is not impossible that there may be some "natural" explanation of all this which at present we are unable to give. But nothing is gained by declaring that the investigators have been hood- winked by fraudulent mediums or deceitful demons. No men are more competent and anxious to expose and eliminate fraud than the scientists who are at work on these problems. Moreover, it is a dangerous thing to attribute anything we cannot understand to the devil. The enemies of Jesus did this and they were wrong.

* *Vide* Gerald Balfour, *The Ear of Dionysius* (*Proceedings, S.P.R.*, vol. xxix.).

There are only two explanations of psychical phenomena that are at all feasible. Either the messages have really come from discarnate human personalities, which is the simpler and more straightforward hypothesis; or else the subconscious mind has been working in a manner that at present we do not understand. The latter explanation introduces difficulties of its own, but has strong support from the teaching of modern psychology. A third suggestion has also been made, namely, that a cosmic mind exists, which functions impersonally and is the real cause of all phenomena. Into this cosmic pool of world-consciousness each separate personality contributes its quota, which may emerge again in abnormal or trance conditions. This is purely speculative, however, and therefore unimportant for our present purpose. Whichever of the two explanations referred to above we choose to adopt, we are driven to the conclusion that the human mind can, and sometimes does, work independently of matter which thus becomes the servant of mind and not its master. This being the case, personality need not necessarily be finally and completely dependent upon matter in order to function.

It is quite conceivable, of course, that Mind and Matter may be two aspects of a single ultimate reality. But using the terms in their ordinary sense, to distinguish between "Matter-as-we-know-it" and "Mind-as-we-know-it," the findings of

sychical research force from us the admission that ere is a reasonable possibility that the dissolution the physical body does not necessarily imply the nal disintegration of the "person" who made use that body in the physical world.

Here again, we must guard against claiming too uch. For "survival" is not the same thing as immortality." As we shall discover at a later age in this enquiry, a world of difference lies etween these two words. Without displaying any ngratitude to those who are conducting an investiation in psychical matters, we must recognise that ne problem of a future life is far bigger than they re able to deal with unaided. Immortality is more han a psychological, it is a religious question, and is from this standpoint that it must be approached. We hope to make this clear in the next chapter. Psychical research can never prove immortality ven if it succeeds in demonstrating survival. And ven if the explanation of the spiritist be true, the tmost that can be claimed is that some personlities survive the shock of death, not necessarily ll. Neither do we know whether or not those ersonalities are destined to live for ever, nor the nature of their ultimate destiny, presuming that hey do. Psychical research may suggest continuity f existence in the hereafter, but we have no *proof* hat the suggestion is true.

Another question is left untouched by psychical

investigation and that is as to whether or not the human mind has a physical basis. Although the mind may function apart from matter, yet there is no evidence from psychical phenomena alone that establishes the proposition that "In the beginning there was Mind." The claim made by many spiritists that psychical research has disposed of materialism cannot therefore be substantiated. If indeed human personality in itself disposes of materialism, then something may be said on behalf of such a claim, but not otherwise.

We must therefore be content to say that from this branch of psychological enquiry the only pertinent fact that emerges is that human personality is not limited to its manifestations in and through the physical body. It can and does function apart from the body, though not normally so. Whatever explanation of psychical phenomena we choose to adopt, it seems difficult to avoid this conclusion.

It may now be possible to estimate the value of the preliminary facts to which brief consideration has been given. We have seen that taken singly and apart no one of them is of sufficient weight to form a stable foundation upon which a doctrine of immortality can be built. Neither can it be truly said that when taken together they are adequate for a demonstration of the reality of a life to come. Possibly some would consider that when stated

arefully they make a *prima facie* case for an xistence beyond the grave. But even so, that eaves us still a long way off the certainty we desire. Yet it should not be inferred that they are altogether vithout value. Taken as a whole they establish he fact that man's cherished craving for immorality is not irrational. They show that a naterialistic explanation of the universe, which in tself would be subversive of any hope of a hereafter, is now deemed insufficient to meet all the acts. Moreover, the liberation of the human mind rom complete dependence upon the body at least uggests that personality is greater than any of its physical manifestations.

We have therefore a background against which mmortality is not utterly out of place. That is not enough, but it is something. For if on other and surer grounds a case can be made out for the existence of a world to come, the considerations dealt with in this chapter will not make it impossible. In the next chapter we shall turn to Christianity for an answer to the question as to whether t is possible to win from religion what science and philosophy of themselves are powerless to achieve, namely, adequate grounds for a reasonable faith in the life immortal.

II

THE CHRISTIAN POSITION

"He is not the God of the dead, but of the living."—MARK xii. 27.

II

THE CHRISTIAN POSITION

In endeavouring to ascertain what Christianity teaches in regard to the life of the world to come, we must be careful to approach the question in a right frame of mind, guarding against prejudice on the one hand and superstition on the other. The two extremes to avoid are an unwillingness to believe anything and a willingness to believe everything. Nothing is easier than to obscure the real issue by almost unconsciously taking up an attitude that prejudges the case from the beginning. A clear, honest, and, if possible, an open mind is particularly necessary for the study of so difficult and delicate a problem as immortality. For there are several pitfalls into which an enquirer may stumble, unless he picks his way with care.

The first danger is that of being misled by the use of words. Obviously, if there is an after life, the plane of existence there will necessarily be so different from this world that no human definitions in terms of our present limited experience will be sufficient to express it. We shall have to content ourselves with the language of poetry and the use of symbols, recognising that the thought behind

the word is always too great for adequate expression. Many do not realise this. Some, finding it impossible to accept the symbols by which immortality is represented, repudiate the idea for which those symbols stand. Others allow symbols to harden into realities and insist upon literal interpretations of words and phrases that are purely symbolic. For example, the "harps of gold and mansions fair" of a childish hymnology are nothing but a source of amusement unless an effort is made to discover their essential content. A mode of life where all is music, that is, where all the discords of this life are harmonised, is an inspiration. An adequate sense of security in place of the uncertainty of tenure that characterises our present existence, is a very desirable possession. The repudiation of ideas such as these because of the manner in which they are expressed, and the insistence upon a literal interpretation of the words in which the ideas have been clothed, are both equally wrong.

Words like "Heaven" and "Hell" are not mere place-names. If they were they would be meaningless. They stand to some degree for certain ideas in regard to the quality of eternal life. This in itself invests them with an undeniable importance. If we can no longer believe that heaven is "up in the sky" and hell is "under the earth," we need not go to the extreme of declaring that heaven is a delusion and hell is a lie. We should ever seek to

discover the idea for which words stand, and not reject the fact because the symbol by which it has been expressed has been misused or has grown old. It will be necessary to refer to this more than once in the following pages.

In the use of language it is important to take care that words do not obscure the truth. Their function is to reveal and not to hide. Writing of Leslie Stephen, John Morley says:

"He could not forgive what he called the old device of twisting faith out of moonshine. Truth to him was truth, and stood first and foremost. An article in a creed was either true or it was not true. A symbol meant something, or else it was illusion and dream."*

That is the right attitude for the enquirer to take. He should not be led astray by words, but he must demand that those words mean something. Symbolism should symbolise reality, or faith will be twisted out of moonshine.

A second risk to which we are exposed is that of becoming entangled in trivialities and irrelevancies. If the great question before us is—do the dead live?—it is comparatively unimportant to discuss the exact nature of the resurrection body. To persecute men because they hold unorthodox views in regard to the mode and method of the resurrection

* John Viscount Morley, *Recollections*.

of Jesus, for instance, when they are prepared to accept the fact, is to mistake the trivial for the essential.

Another and more serious cause of misunderstanding arises from the circumstance that the after life has sometimes been presented in a wrong manner and defended by unfortunate arguments. It is necessary to repudiate the latter in the interests of right thinking. But we ought not to leap to the conclusion that immortality is untrue because it has been stated wrongly and defended badly. For example, the life of the world to come has sometimes been presented as a system of rewards and punishments, with the result that opponents have immediately declared that to believe in heaven and hell is immoral. A man should live worthily, they assert, because it is right to do so and not because he will be rewarded for it hereafter. No right thinking man will be disposed to quarrel with such a statement. But the fault here is that immortality has been taught in a wrong way. Heaven ought never to be thought of merely as a reward for virtue. If it exists at all, it can only be because it is the inevitable result of right living and naturally follows therefrom. That is very different from regarding it in the light of a prize for good conduct. The popular conception of heaven as a place of endless rest which compensates us for the worry and toil of this life is thoroughly unsatisfactory. But the re-

pudiation of this need not involve the denial of immortality altogether.

Again, no subject has suffered more from wrong methods of reasoning than the Christian doctrine of the hereafter. For example, apologists have often attempted to prove their case by the use of natural analogies, which at the best are merely illustrative. In a familiar passage in the Epistles of Paul,* the Apostle advances an argument to show that a God who is sufficiently powerful to transform a seed into a flower can create a "spiritual body" which may serve as a fit vehicle for the human spirit in the next life.

"God giveth it a body even as it pleased Him, and to each seed a body of its own."†

Admitting Paul's premises, that is a valid argument. But to take such an analogy as a proof of immortality is impossible. Because the seed, when subjected to certain conditions, sheds its husk and the life it contains continues to function in a new environment, it does not follow that human life persists at the death of the body. We have no business to press an analogy of this kind into the service of an argument for which it was never intended. Yet this is what has been often attempted.

Still more important in this connection is the

* *Vide* 1 Cor. xv.
† 1 Cor. xv. 38.

passage in the fourth Gospel in which it would appear at first sight as though Jesus made use of a similar analogy for the purpose of demonstrating the reality of the hereafter.

"Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit."*

Assuming for the purposes of argument that these were the actual words of Jesus (which is by no means certain) it is quite clear that He was insisting upon the eternal value of all sacrifice, of which the supreme instance was the giving up of life itself. The point is that sacrifice is never wasted and that if a man is willing to give up his life someone else is benefited thereby. Ultimately he himself gains, because he is lifted up above the temporal things and in his act of sacrifice enters into the eternities. He is keeping his life "unto life eternal." Valuable as this lesson may be it is no proof of the world to come. It was not intended as a proof.

Avoiding then the danger of being misled by symbols, taking all possible pains to use language that represents reality, guarding against the dangers of triviality and irrelevance, above all, distinguishing between the fact of immortality and some of the arguments by which it has been defended, we

* John xii. 24.

are now in a position to sketch in outline the Christian position. The details will be dealt with more fully in subsequent chapters.

The Christian doctrine of the hereafter does not begin with the resurrection of Jesus. Neither does it depend upon what is called "the physical resurrection." It goes back to that which is more fundamental still, namely, the character of God. All students of the New Testament agree that the great contribution that Jesus made to the thinking of the world was His enunciation in life and teaching of the fatherhood of God. He was not the first to say that God is "Father" but He was the first to set forth adequately what that statement implied. It is not enough to affirm that the sayings of Jesus define the character of God in terms of divine parenthood. If we are to be true to the New Testament we must go much further than this. All that He said and did, all that He was, according to the evangelic record, was a representation on the human plane and under temporal conditions of what God is in His essential and eternal being. This has been well expressed by a modern theologian in the following terms:

"The Fatherhood of God, according to the concentient voices of the New Testament writers, was only fully displayed in the Son of God, and in His case not merely in the filial consciousness which was the all-controlling factor of His earthly life, but in

the completed life-history which started from His Incarnation, was continued in His Death and Resurrection, and culminated in His exaltation to the right hand of the Father. Only in this transcendent life-history, according to the New Testament, is the full significance of the Fatherhood of God displayed."*

In a word, not only was Jesus like God, but what is far more important, God is like Jesus.

This view of the character of God carries with it a number of implications that have an immediate bearing upon the question of immortality. It implies fellowship. Divine fatherhood is not mere benignity or the large and general oversight that a well-disposed and benevolent Deity might casually exercise over His children. On the contrary, it means that the separate personality of each individual is the object of particular solicitude on the part of One who will never rest content with anything short of perfect fellowship with each member of His family. According to Jesus, God loves men with a love beyond all human imagination. He has a divine purpose to fulfil in each one of us. His fatherhood is so universal that no one is excluded, and yet so particular that it can be narrowed down to the needs and necessities of the individual.

* Essay on "The Fatherhood of God," by J. Scott Lidgett, D.D. (*The Chief Corner-stone*, edited by W. T. Davison, D.D.).

We may quarrel with this view, we may even say that it is not true. But as a matter of practical experience it answers to human needs in a way that no other presentation of the Divine has ever done. If there be a God at all, it is difficult to think of Him as less than personal. And the highest form of personality known to us is ideal parenthood. Moreover, it affords a satisfactory basis for a doctrine of immortality. For if God be the father of all men, it is an inconceivable thing to suppose that in the hour and article of death He will fling away those personalities that He has created, nurtured and loved. A God such as Jesus revealed, a God like Jesus, could not allow men to perish. The divine fatherhood, as interpreted by Jesus, implies an everlasting relation of all human souls to Him. In rejecting immortality we are therefore rejecting Christ's revelation of God. If we are prepared to do this, well and good. But we cannot hold to the one and deny the other. Moreover, it is not unfair to ask those who repudiate the fatherhood of God what they are prepared to put in its place. Some philosophy of life is essential, otherwise the universe is irrational and the highest hopes of men but the froth and the foam cast up by a meaningless sea of existence.

It is not possible to examine here the various alternatives that have been put forward to take the place of the Christian doctrine of God. But no one

can read the New Testament without feeling that Jesus seemed to have a clearer and more intimate knowledge of God than any other. And where the truth that He claimed to reveal is put to the test of practical experience, we find that it satisfies the deepest needs of all sorts and conditions of men.

It may be said that whilst it is reasonable to suppose that the character of God as interpreted by Jesus leads us to believe that the best and finest souls may enter into a larger fellowship with God in the hereafter, yet to postulate immortality for everyone is irrational and not necessarily Christian. Did Jesus lay down a general principle that all men live after death? May it not be urged that only those who in this life reach conscious fellowship with the Divine can hope to attain immortality? Suppose a man has been given his opportunity in this life and failed. Surely it would be a more Christian thing, so to speak, to allow that man to perish.

We cannot allow this contention without doing a grave injustice to the teaching of Jesus. For this view implies that in such a case as this, God has not only failed but has admitted defeat. Are we to suppose that because for three score years and ten a man has refused to follow the light and declined fellowship with his heavenly Father, that there is therefore no possibility of his ultimate redemption?

f God has all eternity in which to work, it is ifficult to believe that He will acknowledge defeat t the end of that brief span that we call life.

> "If I were damned of body and soul,
> I know whose prayers would make me whole,
> *Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!*"*

Divine parenthood cannot be lower than human motherhood. If God set that high value upon the human soul to which the revelation of Jesus bears witness, He cannot allow any soul to perish at death. For though life on the human plane may have been a failure, it does not follow that it will be a failure for ever. Love is not so easily daunted or defeated.

Of the nature of the life to come Jesus said little. Certainly He did not go into literal detail. When He spoke of the hereafter He used current illustrations which nobody in His day dreamed of interpreting literally. They were of the nature of parable and poetry. The striking phrase attributed to Him in the New Testament is "Eternal Life," which in the fourth Gospel is defined in the following terms:

> And this is life eternal, that they should know Thee the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ."†

We need not argue as to whether these are the actual words of Jesus, for they are in harmony

* Rudyard Kipling. † John xvii. 3.

with His spirit and perfectly convey His meaning. To Him immortality was life, raised to its highest degree and experienced in and through fellowship with God.

Eternal life is not mere survival, nor is it unending time. Whatever temporal associations cling to the Greek word used in all the ancient manuscripts, neither the English word "Everlasting" nor the clumsy "Age-long" are exact equivalents. Eternal life, as conceived by Jesus, is primarily a condition of the soul, a quality of the spirit, an inner peace, which those who love God can enjoy here and now, and realise more fully and completely hereafter. At death the soul that does not know what this experience is will be thrust into "outer darkness," where the wild beasts are and where one is frightened even of himself.

Jesus did not say that it is necessary to await the hour of death for an experience of eternal life. In part it may be ours now. As a modern poet has declared:

> "And if we feel it not amid our strife,
> In all our toiling and in all our pain—
> This rhythmic pulsing of immortal life—
> Then do we work and suffer here in vain."*

The Christian position then, is something far larger than an assertion that the mind outlives the

* Percy C. Ainsworth, *Poems and Sonnets.*

body or that the personality survives the experience of death. It is not a scientific demonstration based upon material facts and tested as one would test an algebraic formula. Immortality cannot be demonstrated like the multiplication table. The Christian argument begins and ends in God. The only proof that it offers is the character of God. He is the God of the living or He is no God. And if it be possible for men to enter into such a fellowship with God as Jesus Himself enjoyed, then no other proof is needed. Philosophy and science may add intellectual confirmation of the Christian hope, but all they can give is insufficient to convince the man who is without any consciousness of God.

> "If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,
> I heard a voice, 'believe no more,'
> And heard an ever-breaking shore
> That tumbled in the Godless deep;
>
> A warmth within the breast would melt
> The freezing reason's colder part,
> And like a man in wrath the heart
> Stood up and answer'd 'I have felt'."*

It is when we "have felt" that we find it impossible to believe that death is "the eternal parting of the ways." It is when we know God that eternal life becomes a reality. The living God, that is the argument of arguments. We [illegible] because

* Tennyson, *In Memoriam*.

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we are God's children. We are charged with something of God's deathless essence. Christianity completes and intensifies the teaching of the book of Genesis that God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."*

God is love and love is life. Therefore love is stronger than death.

* Gen. ii. 7.

III

HEAVEN

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth . . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven."—MATT. vi. 19, 20.

III

HEAVEN

One of the popular fallacies of our time is that a man who believes in heaven thereby unfits himself for the problems of earth. The Church is constantly being reminded that to justify her existence she should feed the poor and abolish the slums. The new Jerusalem, she is told, can be left to take care of itself.

In point of fact, however, there is a vital connection between immortality and the social problem of this or any age. What is more, those men who have had a clear doctrine of the hereafter and have lived up to their beliefs, have usually been the first to exert themselves to the utmost to improve the conditions of the present life. The reason for that is that such men have seen that we need the new Jerusalem here to fit us for fuller service above. If there is continuity of life between this world and the next, the sooner we make this life more in accord with the life of heaven the better. In that endeavour outward circumstances play a not unimportant part. Wise men have seen this and so far as they were able have acted upon it.

Pre-eminent among all others in this connection is the case of Jesus of Nazareth. His ideals are

acclaimed by social reformers of all schools of thought, His teaching forms a text for many a socialist sermon, His life is quoted as the pattern of all good living and He is the acknowledged example of right social conduct and brotherly behaviour. Yet Jesus went so far as to tell His hearers not to concern themselves about "treasures upon the earth," but to take pains to store up "treasures in heaven."

With this example alone before us, to say nothing of countless others, it is not possible to assert with truth that those who believe in heaven are not concerned with the social affairs of this present existence. Such a statement is not in accord with the facts. Indeed, it is highly probable that the reconstruction of society, if it is to proceed on right lines, will be undertaken not by those who are chiefly occupied with the material things of life, but by dreamers and visionaries who really have some kind of contact with things unseen. The men who, like the seer of Patmos, see God's throne of judgement fixed amid the stars, who have a vision of the ideal city "coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband," may well prove to be the social saviours of the race. Only those who themselves are free can deliver others from the bondage of a materialistic civilisation. This is a just and proper claim to make at the outset.

What is meant by the term "heaven"? The

answer to that question can only be given by using the language of poetry and even then the answer is incomplete. What "eye hath not seen nor ear heard" cannot be reduced in an instant to the commonplaces of ordinary prose. As a matter of fact it is much easier to say what the term "heaven" excludes rather than to express its exact connotation. At this stage, therefore, an attempt may be made to remove certain misconceptions that confuse the mind and hinder the apprehension of the truth.

For instance, it is high time we gave up using language implying that heaven is somewhere "up in the sky." Because they supposed that the earth was flat, ancient and medieval writers were able to employ expressions of that nature without fear of misunderstanding or sense of inconsistency. To them, the sky was like a solid vault, studded with jewels and placed over the earth after the manner of an inverted bowl. Above the sky was the throne of God. Under the earth the devil and his angels lived in hell. All those who had faith in Christ would ultimately go to "that bright place beyond the sky" to share a life of endless bliss with God and the holy angels.

We know now that the earth is not flat; that it is a tiny speck in a universe that itself may be but one amongst a myriad others. If therefore we sing hymns or use expressions which imply that heaven

is a fixed and settled place definitely located in the sky, we ought at any rate to be quite clear that we are using the language of poetry or allegory. Without attempting to fetter the poet or hymn-writer, it may be suggested that on the whole phrases that are but the relic of a superseded cosmogony are better avoided. There are other ways, not less poetical and far more picturesque, of describing heaven than many that at present disfigure Christian hymn-books. It may be unnecessary to draw attention to this matter, but it is not wise to take anything for granted.

A protest may also be made against the foolish attempts to literalise the descriptions of the hereafter common to all apocalyptic literature, of which the best-known example is the work that appears in the Bible under the title of "The Revelation of St. John the Divine." The man who wrote that masterly document was saturated with the spirit of his religion and age. A devout Jew, his heaven could be none other than a new Jerusalem. But we, not being Jews, could not possibly be happy there. Interpreted literally such a heaven makes no appeal to us. The truth is, what is essentially a poet's dream ought never to be thought of as a builder's plan. No human conception of the form or content of heaven, be it ancient or modern, should be interpreted literally. The great spiritual realities can never be compressed within the limits of precise

definition nor confined to descriptions that are necessarily materialistic.

Although we may abandon obsolete ideas as to the locality in which heaven is placed or Jewish and medieval descriptions of its form, it does not follow that the conception itself is false. It if be true that mind outlives matter, the possibility of which was suggested in the first chapter, there must be some sphere in which mind continues to operate. If it be true that our personalities are dear to God and that He will not therefore allow them to perish, which is the only possible inference to be drawn from the teaching of Jesus, then those personalities must continue to manifest themselves in "a world to come." Moreover, in that world there must be certain distinctions. One such we may call "heaven," another "hell." It is not suggested here that these are the only distinctions. There may be others, but for the moment and for the sake of clearness it may be well to confine our thought to these.

In this sense, heaven denotes a happy state of fellowship with God, which state Jesus referred to as "eternal life." Hell is the exact opposite, namely, a condition of separation from God, which separation may be temporary or permanent, partial or complete. To that point it will be desirable to return later.* These distinctions are spiritual, not

* *Vide* Chapters IV. and V.

physical. Hence the difficulty of defining them. Indeed, the phrase "the world to come" is itself only a symbol derived from our present environment.

The question that now emerges is as to what is meant by fellowship or communion with God. We shall only arrive at an accurate answer by adopting the methods of Jesus, who taught His disciples that spiritual realities could best be understood by considering them in relation to the facts of everyday life. For instance, all His thinking about God rested upon the facts of ordinary experience. "You know what fatherhood is, or what it ought to be" He said in effect. "Very well; think of God as your father and you cannot go far astray." In like manner we know what fellowship is. When men and women meet together and are anxious about the same things, or are pursuing a common quest for the truth, or are thinking together about certain positive facts, they are in fellowship. Such fellowship will grow and grow until it reaches a point when thoughts intermingle and heart warms to heart in a close affection that calls out the very best in human nature. In the finest sense of the word human beings so drawn together become "friends." They share the joy of a common affection, they are united by a bond that is all the more real because it is intangible. "No longer do I call you servants," said Jesus to His disciples, "but I

have called you friends." We understand all that. It is human and comparatively simple. It depends upon the measure in which a common experience is shared.

It is exactly the same with God. To the extent that we have anything at all in common with God we are in communion with Him. For example, if any man loves beauty, because God also loves beauty, he is in fellowship with the Divine, in that particular, at any rate. Such a man may be immoral, he may be a drunkard and a liar, but if he loves beauty, at that point he is in touch with God, even though in all else he may deny Him. Beauty in itself is an avenue to God. True religion includes beauty as one of its essential factors. This is true nationally as well as individually. The Jews, with their marked instinct for religion, were not the only people who had fellowship with God. The Greeks, who loved the beautiful, after their fashion and in their way, were also in some kind of relation with Him.

Again, if any man loves truth and hates a lie, whatever may be his attitude to the Christian Church, at some point he is in touch with God. To the extent that he is on fire for the truth, to the extent that he hates hypocrisy, to the extent that he is willing to sacrifice in order that the truth may prevail, he is in fellowship with God, who is Truth. Again, if a man is kind, considerate, loving and

gentle, if his character be adorned with the grace of tenderness, to that extent he also is in fellowship with God. It may be that his mind is not big enough to compass the problems of the age; his house and home may be artistically unlovely because he has no eye for colour and no sense of the beautiful; but in spite of these defects as he is a lover of goodness he is a lover of God. They who love beauty, truth or goodness, in their several ways are in fellowship with God. To the degree that we touch reality, to the extent that we share with God any eternal or spiritual experience we are in communion with the Infinite. We are "friends with our heavenly Father." We possess "treasure in heaven."

Heaven, according to the thought of Jesus, is perfect fellowship with the Father. It is not limited to one aspect, whether it be beauty, truth or goodness. When at all points and in all respects we are at one with God, then we know what heaven is. One reason why a belief in the world to come appeals to the deepest instincts of mankind is that no man gets to that point here and now. We are caught up by things material. We lay up for ourselves treasures upon the earth. In the hour of death we lose all we have garnered here save the eternal treasures of beauty, truth and goodness. These being immortal abide for ever. "For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face:

now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I have been known. But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love."* So the Apostle sums up all human fellowship with God under the one category of love. In so doing he has revealed the great secret of God.

Any man who has fellowship with God also has fellowship with all others engaged on a similar quest. Just as those who love beauty or truth are drawn together by a common affection, so those who love God find communion with others of like mind. If we loved God perfectly we should love one another perfectly and our fellowship would endure for ever; for love, like God, is eternal. Indeed, the nearest approach we can make in this life to the life of heaven is the harmony of mind with mind, the cleaving of heart to heart in a selfless devotion to a common cause. Hence heaven may be described as fellowship, first with God and then with those with whom we share common ideals. It is not possible to define the form in which that fellowship will be expressed in the hereafter. In the symbolic language of Jesus, we shall drink the wine of life "anew" in the kingdom of God, and the wine will be new wine. It is surely extremely probable that those with strong spiritual affinities will be drawn together in

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12, 13.

a higher unity than is possible here. The souls of those who are akin will progress together to a fuller knowledge of the love of God.

If all this be true, it must have a very practical application to the question of social reform. For the charge that can be justly brought against modern civilisation is that it does not encourage the spirit of fellowship either with God or man. We do not prize beauty as we might do. We do not love truth as we ought. We do not exalt righteousness. In other words, we do not desire fellowship with God. Our whole endeavours are directed towards laying up treasure upon the earth. The possession of treasure in heaven is not a matter that excites our interest or captures our imagination.

At the present time there is also a deplorable lack of fellowship between man and man. In time of war, owing to the menace of a common enemy, we draw near together. Distinctions of class are forgotten. The comradeship of the trenches becomes a real and precious thing. Even amongst those who remain at home there is a fellowship that is of the right quality and spirit. When war ceases, how soon we get into the old ruts again! Employer and employé revive the ancient enmities. Those who cannot obtain work not unnaturally rebel against society. Even in the Church itself the cause of unity languishes. The Labour movement,

to judge by the utterances of its professed leaders, is held back by the lack of real fellowship within its borders. The fear is removed, the enemy is beaten, the guns are silent and comradeship is no more. Class is pitted against class, the "haves" and the "have-nots" renew their feud and the spirit of fellowship is defeated.

Any man who has really been in touch with God and in so doing caught a glimpse of heaven, cannot fail to strive against all the disintegrating forces that divide men, and to work with all his might for the principles of a common brotherhood. If fellowship be a principle rooted in the nature of God Himself, if it endures beyond the grave, it becomes the more imperative to capture its spirit now, in order that we may enjoy it to the full then. For we are all one in Christ Jesus.

After all, the only key that can unlock the gate of heaven is love. If we have no love in our hearts, either for God or man, we can have no hope of entering heaven. Without love we are condemned already. Orthodoxy is no passport to heaven. Do not the devils believe and tremble? Mere belief never yet saved any man, not even belief in Jesus.

'Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven."*

Neither is a profession of religion sufficient.

* Matt. vii. 21.

"And I say unto you that many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness."*

Heaven is for those whose treasure is there. It is for those who love the things that God loves. It is for those who practice fellowship. We have need to take fresh heed of the teaching of Jesus, to catch His spirit, to have faith in Him. Faith is a far bigger thing than belief. It is really belief at work, or, as the author of *Ecce Homo* has said, an adventurous "start forward" to take His side. And he who has faith in Jesus will come to love Him, and so to love God and his fellows. Because all fellowship is divine we may enter heaven now. Begun on earth, the joys of communion with God will be continued and deepened in the life of the world to come.

"The only heaven thou shalt behold
Is builded of thy thoughts and deeds;
Hopes are its pearls and faith its gold,
And love is all the light it needs."†

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* Matt. viii. 11, 12.

† Percy C. Ainsworth, *Poems and Sonnets*.

IV

HELL

"And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame."
—Luke xvi. 23, 24.

IV

HELL

A MAN once wrote a parable of eternity. He described a huge mountain, a thousand miles high, a thousand miles broad, a thousand miles long, set in the midst of a remote desert. Once every thousand years a bird passes over its summit, and in passing, touches it with its beak. When the whole of the mountain is worn away by the friction of the bird's beak, then the first moment of eternity will have passed.

If that be true and the souls of all those who reject Christ are tortured in inextinguishable flame, as our fathers believed, not only during the first moment of eternity but for illimitable years and centuries, then one may well ask what kind of tyrant sits on the throne of the universe and permits such things to be.

As a matter of fact, nobody now believes in a hell of such a character A man may think and say that he believes, but if for one moment he really held the view that God's rebellious children are tormented by fire or by demons *for ever*, it is more than doubtful i he could remain sane. By general

consent we have abandoned these crude an materialistic conceptions, and we have abandone them for all time.

At the present moment the difficulty is that w are not sure what to put in their place. Our mind have rebelled against notions that we feel to b outworn if not ridiculous. The result is that th idea of hell is either rejected altogether or els retained under protest. There is a grave danger i this. It is dangerous to scoff at hell, if for no othe reason than that Jesus had a great deal to say abou it. In the story of Dives and Lazarus, for example in which there is the clearest description of th hereafter ever given by Christ, He assumed tha the natural result of a life of selfish indifference t the needs of others was a condition of "torments." It is true that both men were in Hades, which i the Jewish underworld, and not Gehenna, the plac of torment. But one was tortured* whilst the othe was in a condition of supreme happiness. It i also dangerous to the whole moral and intellectua life to cling to a belief inherited from the pas hoping all the time that it may not be true which is the attitude of most good Christian to-day.

At the risk of mistake and misunderstanding therefore, it has become necessary to look carefull

* *Cf.* Moffatt's translation: "And as he was being torture in Hades."

into this question. It can no longer be ignored. It may be that careful enquiry will elicit certain principles that may serve as a foundation on which a reasonable faith can be built.

In the last chapter heaven was described as a happy state of fellowship with God and also with our fellow-men. All attempts to literalise that state were frankly abandoned. The same method may be adopted here. For example, no one reading the story of Dives and Lazarus would dream of interpreting literally a phrase like "Abraham's bosom." It is obvious that this is a picturesque manner of describing a condition of joyous fellowship. In like manner we have no right to assume that the "torments" suffered by Dives were literal. They describe the condition of the soul; they were the inevitable result of the quality of his life. Again, the gulf that separated Dives and Lazarus in Hades was not a physical one. Two men may be riding together in a railway carriage and one may be in Abraham's bosom whilst the other is in torments. Between the two there is a gulf fixed which neither of them could bridge even if he would. That is true here; it is also true hereafter. Neither is it unreasonable to suppose that for him who passes into the unseen with no love in his heart towards God or his fellows there awaits a condition of spiritual torment.

The next point to consider arises from the fact

that even so far as this life is concerned there are certain evil forces at work that tend to mar our happy fellowship with God and with one another. All these may be summed up under the head of what theologians call "sin." A careful distinction should be made between "sins" and "sin." Many of the actions that are spoken of as "sins" are merely habits that are not respectable. The god they offend is the god of public opinion. And similarly many actions approved by the public conscience must unquestionably be worse in the sight of a holy God than the sins that convention condemns. "Sin" is something other than "sins." It is that subtle, indefinable spirit that undermines a man's higher nature; that spoils his communion with God; and that hinders his fellowship with others. It is an anti-social force that ruins human lives and human ideals.

Jesus never went into the question of the origin of sin. He recognised that it was there and He was downright about it. For instance, the Pharisees were remarkably free from what the conscience of the age condemned as sins. They fasted, they gave tithes, they observed to the best of their ability all the requirements of the ceremonial law. But the whole bent of their lives was wrong. They had little love for the outcast. They spurned the alien. They had no pity for the unfortunate. They offended against the greatest of all God's laws, the

law of love. In other words, they were in the grip of sin. Therefore they came under the condemnation of Jesus, who said to them: "How shall ye escape the judgement of Gehenna?"

Is it not true to say that in every age, ours not least of all, the same evil and anti-social force is at work? The contemptuous spirit, the selfish, Dives-like temper, the callous or greedy or lazy mind, all these are manifestations of an evil and malignant force that keeps men back from God and hinders their brotherly relations with one another. This it is that has dire consequences in the world to come, and whatever their form may be, they *are* consequences and follow from what has gone before.

The fallacy of much of our modern thinking is that it ignores these grave facts. The spirit of the age will not face up to the grimmer side of life. We have fallen into the habit of supposing that sin is a light and easy thing that lies on the surface. The popular conception is that it is doing certain things. It is far more difficult and complex than this. It is *being* rather than *doing*. How foolish it is to imagine that sin can be discarded as readily as a man flings off his clothes. We think that if the time ever comes when we shall stand before the judgement seat of God we shall evade all the consequences that follow from yielding to sin, by reminding Him tactfully that, after all, He is our

Father, and therefore He ought to treat us leniently. What is perhaps the most nauseating form of that attitude is the adaptation of crude forms of evangelical religion to its purposes by declaring that God has punished Christ in our stead and therefore we shall go free by the merits of His blood. What do we suppose God is like if He can be treated like that? Science tells us that every cause has its corresponding effect. Nature assures us that a man must reap as he has sown. The highest thinking of the most enlightened men has always drawn a sharp distinction between right and wrong. Why should it be different on the other side?

The plain truth is that if we get caught up in the entanglements of sin, we drive a wedge between ourselves and God. The elder brother, in the parable of the Prodigal Son, so far as his outward conduct was concerned, was in all respects correct. But his whole attitude to his father and brother was wrong. By encouraging a wrong spirit, by succumbing to sin, by becoming angry so that he "would not go in," he jeopardised the fellowship that hitherto had existed between himself and his father. Therefore his father came out "and intreated him." There is no more beautiful touch than this in the whole story.

Imagine a boy who by constant self-indulgence weakens his will power so that he becomes a victim to alcoholism. The world condemns him because

he is a drunkard. The real tragedy lies deeper and consists in the fact that by allowing sin to reign in his life he is spoiling fellowship. His mother loves him, prays for him, works for him, forgives him not once but many times. None the less, if that lad continues to drift with the stream he is bound to cause a breach between himself and his mother that ultimately may destroy the fine quality of their fellowship. It matters not how deeply the mother may love her son, she cannot have the same communion with him as if he were free from the domination of sin. A serpent has reared its ugly head in their garden and life can never be the same again. But suppose the boy gave up his evil habits by reason of some re-enforcement of his moral life, some influx of power that fortified his will, what then? Would not the mother receive him and the old relationship be restored? In nine cases out of ten the answer would be "No." There are very few mothers who could obliterate from their thought the memory of the years the locust had eaten. The bitterness would remain, the sting would abide, even though the love were as strong and enduring as only mother-love can be. In the tenth case, it is possible that the past might be forgotten and every delicate feeling restored as before, but how difficult both for mother and son! And the longer the repentance is delayed the wider becomes the gulf. The tenth case helps us to

understand God, except that it does not go far enough. His forgiveness will be complete. It is not even that the old relationship is restored, but a new and higher relationship will be built upon the ruins of the old. His love will indeed bridge the widest gulf, but not easily nor without cost, either to God or to man. He who "spared not His only-begotten Son" is prepared to go to any length to redeem His children. But the price He pays is heavier than any of us knows.

Notwithstanding these facts men think and speak of God as though He is really not concerned very greatly with human sin. They imagine that at any moment and on easy terms, His forgiveness can be obtained. To cling to sin and to escape its consequences is what we all desire, and there are actually those who believe it to be possible. Nothing could be more foolish. The truth is that sin so perverts the personality that the man under its domination becomes a being other than his natural self, so that it comes to pass in the long run that there is very little for God to lay hold of. No point of contact exists between such a man and the divine. Repentance is primarily a coming to oneself. Yet that is but the first step. If ever a soul, who knowingly and deliberately chose evil and so succumbed to the power of sin, is redeemed, it can only be by a long and painful process in which God may have to remake him from the be-

ginning. Thus Browning makes the Pope speak of Guido the murderer:

> "Else I avert my face, nor follow him
> Into that sad, obscure, sequestered state
> Where God unmakes but to remake the soul
> He else made first in vain . . . "*

Sin is the great divider. This cannot be stated too strongly, for it is true to life as it is true to God. Its malignant entanglements go right down to the roots of human personality. If persisted in, it leads to spiritual separation from God and also from the great and the good in this life and the life to come. That, surely, is hell. To Jesus it was the outer darkness, the undying worm, Gehenna, torments. It is difficult to think of any word too strong to express the awful fact. For into the after life personality alone enters. The "purple and fine linen" as well as the "rags" of this life cease to be. For a man to discover that he does not possess any quality that relates him to God or to things that are spiritual must indeed be "torments."

What could be worse than the loneliness of the naked soul cut off from fellowship with the source of all beauty, goodness and love! It is not mere physical separation like that of Alexander Selkirk on his desert island. It is spiritual aloofness like

* Robert Browning, *The Ring and the Book.*

that of a man who lives in a crowded city, the language of whose inhabitants he is unable to speak, the thoughts of whose citizens he is unable to understand. Coleridge, in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," has given a description of hell that is far more terrible than the fiery furnace of medievalism :

> "Alone, alone, all, all alone,
> Alone on a wide, wide sea,
>
> * * * *
>
> So lonely 'twas that God himself
> Scarce seemèd there to be."

That is hell. Lazarus is in Abraham's bosom, a figure of speech that implies love and fellowship. Dives is alone, and he craves for a human touch, even though it be that of the beggar who in his lifetime he had regarded as being beneath contempt.

The next question that arises is as to whether this state of separation from God is partial or complete, temporary or permanent. At least three rival theories have been put forward by Christian teachers in reply to that question, all of them claiming to be based on the New Testament. Of these, none has up to the present finally triumphed. Thus it is said that however long hell may last it does not last for ever, since in the end everyone will turn to God. Others assert that the only way to

get rid of sin is to destroy it completely, and as this is not possible without the destruction of the personality, ultimately all those who die in their sins will finally perish. Others, again, teach that evil remains evil for ever and those who espouse it have no hope of escape and will therefore endure punishment always. These doctrines are known respectively as the doctrine of universal restoration, of annihilation and of everlasting punishment.

To argue the pros and cons of these rival hypotheses brings neither relief nor profit. It is true they represent the earnest desire of sincere men to find a satisfactory solution to difficulties of heart and mind. They are an endeavour to interpret the teaching of Scripture and to satisfy an innate human craving for perfect justice. But there are so many difficulties connected with all of them that it may very well be that none is absolutely true. It is better to put such speculations aside in order to enter the realm of certainty. There are some things of which we can be sure. One is that God will never separate Himself from any human soul if by any means it can be prevented. Another is that if any soul does become separated from God and there is the remotest chance of healing the breach, so far as God is concerned that chance will not be neglected.

To put this plainly if crudely, we may safely say that God damns no man. If anyone has hell in his

heart, it is his own sin that has created such a condition. God keeps no soul in hell merely for the sake of punishment or to satisfy His own wounded feelings. If it be possible for a soul in hell to turn back to God it is certain that our heavenly Father will put up no arbitrary barrier to block the way. It is difficult to understand how it is that good people can suppose that the blood of Christ can cleanse the foulest soul up to the moment of death and have no power or virtue after death. Does God love us here and not there? Is the death of Christ available only up to a certain date, after which it loses all its efficacy? In the Apostles' Creed the Church affirms that Jesus "descended into hell," that is, into Hades, the world of shadows. This is not merely a roundabout way of saying that Jesus died a real death and for a certain period His soul was somewhere between earth and heaven. It implies a real experience, and the suggestion made in the First Epistle of Peter that this descent was for the purpose of preaching to the spirits in prison* may not be far wrong after all. If once this is granted then the implication is that it was possible for those fettered souls to respond. Indeed, if hell be separation from God then it is an experience that may be undergone in this life, of which Jesus Himself knew something, though but for a brief space.

* 1 Pet. iii. 19 *ff.*

At the moment of dereliction when He cried from the cross "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Jesus suffered the pangs of hell. And now He is "seated at the right hand of God the Father."

The gospel of Jesus, then, is undaunted even by hell. Only one thing can separate any human soul from the love of God, and that is human free will. If we choose, we can say "No" to God and we can continue to say "No" hereafter. Theoretically, we can go on saying "No" to all eternity, though it is beyond the power of thought to conceive of any soul doing so in actual fact. None the less, its possibility may be admitted. Everyone knows that psychologically it is correct to say that each time we say "No" it becomes the more difficult to say "Yes." It is not likely to be any easier hereafter than it is now. Dives desired that Lazarus might come to him in Hades, but he was told that the gulf between them could not be crossed. It was not that God was keeping Dives out of heaven or refusing him the ministry of one who could help him, but because sin had so mastered him that he had nothing in common with God, or Abraham, or even Lazarus. The one glimmer of hope in this parable is in the fact that Dives began to exercise some kind of concern for his five brothers. What its final issue may have been we are not told.

It must be an experience of real terror to wake up

to the knowledge that by folly and neglect we have lost the point of contact with God. Such knowledge drove Judas to suicide. Jesus shuddered as He spoke of the "outer darkness" consequent upon human sin. He bade His hearers take heed lest they closed any avenue that led to the divine.

"And if thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out and cast it from thee. . . . And if thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off and cast it from thee. . . . Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth . . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven."

There is but one power in the world that can master sin, and that is the power of love. If any man says "I have neither the courage nor the strength to come back to God," then he may rely wholly upon the love of God. That is the inner meaning of the cross of Christ, and that is why so many men and women in the course of history have discovered therein their one hope for this life and the next. The cross reveals the suffering love of God. It displays the unspeakable anguish of God when men fail to respond to that love. If through the power of sin a man loses contact with the Divine, his path home is by way of the cross. To risk what happens hereafter because God is all-pitiful is a cowardly and a foolish policy. If it be difficult to return to the Father now, it is not likely to be easier

n. All the laws of the universe bear witness to t. But so great and so urgent is the Father's e that when men and women reject goodness re is sorrow in the presence of the angels of God. we say "No" to God we are widening the gulf ween Him and us. If we say "Yes" we make it ssible for Him to remake our personality in order t it may be fit for the fellowship of heaven.

V

PURGATORY, AND PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD

"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire."—1 Cor. iii. 15.

V

PURGATORY, AND PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD

In the preceding chapters emphasis has been laid upon the fact that heaven and hell are states or conditions of soul, rather than definite and fixed places. In some sense it may be true that heaven is a place, but if it is, that which makes it heaven is not its golden streets or jasper walls, but the condition of the soul that enjoys it. In like manner it may be possible for some to think of hell as a place, but if it is, it will not be a cauldron of fire, but an environment in which the soul is out of touch with God. The distinctions of the world to come are moral and spiritual.

Further, the one concern of God, that about which He is most anxious, is to bring all souls into final and complete harmony with Himself. We cannot suppose that He ceases to care for men and women after they have passed through the gates of death. God erects no barriers between Himself and His children either in this life or in the world to come. If barriers there be, they are there by the misuse of human free will.

We have now to take into account the large class

of persons of whom it is true to say that they are neither good enough for heaven nor bad enough for hell. They are not entirely out of fellowship with God since right impulses stir within them. Aspirations after the good, the true and the beautiful, live in the secret places of their souls. But it cannot be said with truth that they know God. The tender intimacies of friendship with Him are not theirs. Often this state of affairs is the result of circumstances and cannot be ascribed wholly to evil within. Nobody would dare to assert that they are entirely under the dominance of sin.

> "And the High Soul climbs the High Way,
> And the Low Soul gropes the Low,
> And in between, on the misty flats,
> The rest drift to and fro."*

It is those "in between" that are the problem. There can be little doubt or difficulty in regard to the high soul. Under any theory of the hereafter his progress will be toward God. There is less certainty, perhaps, about the low soul. But he goes to "his own place." What of the rest?

To that question evangelical theology has not as yet given any satisfactory answer. The Roman Catholic Church, by its dogma of purgatory, does make a genuine attempt to deal with the problem, for which reason its claims ought not to

* John Oxenham, *The King's Highway*.

be passed by in silence. Rome declares that only those who at death are completely cleansed from sin enter heaven. Those who definitely and wilfully reject the catholic faith go to hell. Those who accept the catholic faith, but are not entirely free from sin, or those who reject the faith through ignorance or misunderstanding, pass at death through a period of suffering and purgation until they are sufficiently purified to be ready for the bliss of heaven. Further, it is affirmed that this period may be shortened by prayers and masses said by the living on behalf of the dead.

At the Reformation this dogma was swept away, and for several excellent reasons. In the first place, it cannot be found in canonical scripture, which for the Reformers was the final court of appeal. In the second place, it was abused in practice, owing to the fact that rich men were able to pay for masses to be said in perpetuity, and so to ensure for themselves immunity from the full pains of purgatory, whilst poor men, who were not in a position to make such provision, were unable to claim a like indulgence.

It is not suggested that this dogma rests upon this mercenary footing at the present time. But there is no doubt that in the days immediately preceding the Reformation financial considerations of this nature were involved. We cannot be too thankful that the Reformers cut out of their theology

a belief that in practice led to such distinctions between rich and poor.

There is also another reason why the Roman doctrine of purgatory is highly dangerous, which the Reformers did not perceive, owing to the fact that their own theology was not altogether free from a similar fault. The Roman dogma seems to imply that heaven is a fixed place of endless bliss in which there is no room for further progress. When the soul arrives there, that is the end. If this really is the case, the result can only be a condition of boredom that is the very antithesis of all we desire and a negation of heaven itself.

In spite of all the difficulties attendant upon the Roman position, underneath the dogma, however, there is a measure of truth that the Reformers overlooked. For if in the world to come our personalities are the same, then for those whose hold upon God is feeble and whose link with things divine is slender, the way home may indeed be painful. Perfect communion with God may not come in an instant, "flashed out by one blow,"* but rather may be the result of a process of development in which the soul is indeed tried, as by fire. Whether one thinks of this world or the next, the effort of getting rid of sin is no light one and it may be that purgatory, in some form or other, is inevitable before any human soul can reach the perfect

* Robert Browning, *The Ring and the Book.*

fellowship with God that heaven implies. There must be a doctrine implying the possibility of infinite progress, the higher stages of which are connoted by the term "heaven," but for the lower stages of which Protestant theology has no fitting word.

What is necessary, then, is to separate the conception of purgatory from the materialistic and penal ideas that the Roman Church has introduced into it, and to free it from the obvious abuses that have destroyed its usefulness and against which the Reformers rightly protested. Moral purification after death is by no means a wrong idea. There is much to be said for it. Even in the case of the saints some cleansing is necessary before they are fit for perfect communion with God. We must accept progress in the hereafter as part of the divine plan, just as we accept it for this life. For, as has already been pointed out, sin is not an external thing that can be lightly discarded in a moment, but a moral disease, an entanglement of the soul that can only be removed by the progressive operations of a mighty love. Such progress, such moral purification, necessarily implies a measure of spiritual pain. It is impossible to reach upward to any further height in the spiritual world without regretting that we have ever fallen so low. It is impossible even to appreciate any advance in truth without feeling the pang of parting with lower and more elementary

conceptions that hitherto have controlled the mind.

Indeed, if any soul has become so entangled in sin as to have parted from God and in consequence finds himself at death in that state of separation from the divine that we call hell, is there any reason why it should be dogmatically asserted that it will be impossible for that soul for ever to say "No" to the enticement of evil? Surely God can never rest content if such is the case. It would mean that all His gracious purposes would be frustrated and involve His utter defeat. But if once it be admitted that a possibility exists in the after life for any soul to turn away from evil, then it becomes positively necessary to postulate the existence of a way home. That way cannot be easy and must involve pain.

If we can only bring ourselves to think of the life to come not in terms of time or sense but in terms of quality of life, then we can never cease to hope that somehow by God's good grace all lost and separated souls may pass as by fire from the loneliness of the outer darkness into the light of His nearer presence. It may not be wise to dogmatise but it cannot be wrong to hope.

It must be admitted that ideas such as these imply a revolution in the thinking of many good people in regard to the hereafter. Not only must they part with literalistic and physical conceptions of the world to come, but they must abandon the

notion that at death final judgement is pronounced on a man's life, so that he passes immediately into the extreme joy of heaven or the extreme misery of hell. In the New Testament it is constantly asserted that judgement does take place. It could not be otherwise in a moral universe. But it is by no means out of harmony with the teaching of Jesus to assert that such judgement may not be a single and irrevocable act. God is always judging, and His judgements are according to the standards of Christ. Such judgements, however, may be in the nature of a continuous process, which goes on and will go on, until evil is finally overthrown.* Between heaven, which is perfect fellowship with the Father, and hell, which is separation from Him, there may be an infinite number of degrees of life. The underlying idea of purgatory would seem to correspond to those degrees, and it is at least convenient to have some term by which they can be expressed.

It may be objected that the New Testament is silent on this question. If it could be proved beyond the reach of dispute that Christ accepted the conception of purgatory, doubtless it would at once command general acceptance in Protestant circles. Not improperly, however, it is asked, On what occasion did Jesus ever teach anything that could carry such an interpretation?

It must be frankly admitted, in reply, that no

* See Chapter VII.

clear and categorical statement of this kind can be attributed to our Lord.* Moreover, the name does not appear in Scripture. It has been urged that "Purgatory" is the Roman Catholic term for the Jewish "Hades," but before that can be accepted a careful study of the history lying behind both expressions should be made. It is probably correct to affirm that Romanism has carried the idea of Hades to a further stage, but it is that later development to which Protestant thought takes such exception. Jesus was always reticent about the manner of the after life, though He made use of expressions that were current in His age. None the less, He did affirm certain principles, which surely His followers have a right to apply as well as they are able. He taught, for example, that it is possible for men to cut themselves adrift from the spirit of love. Dives, the rich fool, and the man who neglected to give a cup of cold water are all illustrations of this. He affirmed also and with equal clearness, that those who love God and their fellows are finally brought into complete fellowship with God. But He left altogether the question as to the fate of that large class of persons which comes between the two.

Does that mean that we are to leave the question undecided also? Not by any means. The correct procedure for us is to look again into His teaching

* *Cf.* Luke xii. 47, 48. May not this be a hint at "Purgatory"?

and deal with the problem as we do with all other doubtful matters, namely, in the light of His general attitude to God and man. We cannot go far wrong if we fall back upon the centralities of the Christian position.

The main burden of the message of Jesus was indisputably the fatherhood of God. Because we insist upon this, the old doctrine of unending and literal torment has had to be abandoned. Because we insist upon this, we cannot feel satisfied that the last word is with those who believe in an everlasting hell. Men and women with children of their own know what parenthood means and rightly refuse to attribute to God feelings and actions of which they themselves could never be guilty. Is God less loving than we are? Is He less tender than the man into whose eyes tears will come because his child is suffering? It cannot be. To accept a doctrine of divine fatherhood that is lower than human fatherhood is to deny the spirit of Christ's teaching and to be false to the message of the incarnation. Whatever suffering awaits us beyond, and suffering there must be if human sin brings its harvest of pain, it cannot be merely penal. Its quality must be remedial or God would deny Himself. He could not permit it unless it had in it an efficacy to assist the sinner on his homeward way. In the divine code there can be no provision for penal servitude. We feel instinctively that this

is true, in spite of the theologians. And such feelings are prompted by the spirit of Christ.

It is fair and just, therefore, to argue that even if Scripture is silent in regard to purgatorial fire, it is not silent in regard to the love of God. All dogmas must finally be brought into harmony with that, or they are not Christian dogmas. Hence we must never tolerate any form of teaching that denies God's love or affronts His holiness. We must also be prepared to consider seriously any proposition that interprets and applies the central truth of His fatherhood. This is the only safe ground to take, and it is far more sure than the plan of building up a doctrine on a number of isolated passages, torn from their context and artificially joined together.

Another objection that may be raised is that if the old ideas in regard to heaven and hell are abandoned men will take unfair advantage of their liberty. If everything is to come right in the end, why bother? Thus Christian preachers are urged to hold fast to the doctrine of everlasting punishment in case the way to heaven should seem too easy. The curious fact is that even those who urge such loyalty to what is called orthodoxy, usually couple with their pleading the practical exhortation not to lay too much stress upon hell lest the hearer should be offended by too vigorous a statement of the penalties that follow wrongdoing. Hence candidates for ordination are carefully examined lest

they should not be "sound" on this question, and then told to say no more about it. What manner of advice is this? Why be silent in regard to everlasting punishment if it is true? Ought it not to be declared from every pulpit and shouted from every house-top? To believe in a doctrine of such terrible importance and not to declare it is to be guilty of treachery to the truth. If, indeed, all those who do not "accept Christ" are to be irretrievably lost for ever and for ever, then mankind is in such peril that for any Christian preacher to remain silent on the subject is to be recreant to all that makes him a man.

The real truth is that even those who profess to accept the old teaching in regard to heaven and hell are doubtful about it. Their hearts deny what their lips confess. One can only hope that with the passing of the present transitional period a more robust faith will emerge.

It cannot be stated too strongly or too plainly that those who accept the idea of progress in the world to come do not assert that everything will be right in the hereafter whatever may be the manner of the life here. They affirm the exact opposite. They who treat the doctrine of the future life lightly are not those who base their thinking upon the teaching of Jesus and who insist upon the love of God. They who are guilty of flippancy in this matter are those who say: "Only believe and all

will be well. There is no punishment for those who believe." What a travesty of the teaching of the New Testament is this! John Wesley, who was not only a great evangelical preacher but a profound student of the Scriptures, in giving directions to his followers, wrote:

"Once more, beware of Solifidianism; crying nothing but 'Believe, believe!' and condemning those as ignorant or legal who speak in a more scriptural way."*

His advice is worth applying to the present instance. Were belief the only necessity for entering heaven more than half of the New Testament would have to be rewritten. Jesus said that the man who sinned against love had better not have been born. Belief alone could not save him. For the upward way to God is very steep and very difficult.

None the less it is there. If the Roman dogma of purgatory be rejected, therefore, we ought not to be altogether blind to the value of the idea underlying it, namely, that by spiritual suffering a man may be brought back home. The love of God persists and persists in man's immortal soul until that love wins, until the soul freely and gladly co-operates with the Father, until every barrier is broken down and the prodigal in the far country

* John Wesley, *Cautions and Directions given to the greatest Professors in the Methodist Societies.* (1762.)

comes to himself and cries, "I will arise and go to my Father!" When that moment comes, then indeed the Angel may sing:

> "O happy, suffering soul! for it is safe,
> Consumed, yet quickened by the glance of God."*

This raises the further question of prayers for the dead. Those who hold to the rigid Protestant doctrine that the fate of the soul is finally fixed at death object to this practice on the ground that no petitions to the Almighty can avail to alter the destiny of those we love in the hereafter. But even supposing this to be the case, can anyone in the name of Christ attempt to stop a sorrowing woman from asking God to bless and comfort the soul of one who is dearer to her than life itself? Moreover, prayer is larger than petition. Surely, in seeking communion with God it is possible to include in that act the souls of those we love who have passed on into the larger life? Indeed, if as has been suggested, there is room in the world to come for progress, by whatever name such progress may be called, who can tell the extent to which the love of a friend on earth may help the departed soul? Because we know so little of the actual conditions of the after life, dogmatism would be unwise, but the door must not be shut against those who desire to pray to their heavenly Father on behalf of their

* Cardinal Newman, *The Dream of Gerontius.*

friends on the other side. Whatever influence ou prayers may have on them, nothing can bring mo solace to the mourner than to talk to God abo them, in particular and not merely in genera After all, we have no right to bring our tendere emotions to the touchstone of a remorsele theology. The basal instincts of the soul are fr quently more to be trusted than the logical schem of ecclesiastics. If the heart prompts us to pra who will dare to hinder? Of course, eve emotional act should be finally controlled by t intellect. Intuition must never assume comple authority over the reason. But the theologic repression of spiritual instinct is always dangero and generally without justification. God, wh knows the desolation of bereavement, will not chi the widowed soul. He who understands huma love will never turn away from the loving hea Some are here and others are there, but we are a one family.

"Yet in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed trust my spirit clings;
I know that God is good.

* * * *

And Thou, O Lord! by whom are seen
Thy creatures as they be,
Forgive me, if too close I lean
My human heart on Thee!"*

* J. G. Whittier, *The Eternal Goodness.*

It may be true that we need the prayers of the dead more than they need ours, yet the world is "bound by gold chains about the feet of God" and love can never be wrong. On the wings of prayer our love may go out to the friends we cannot see but whom we still hold dear. For it may be that their upward progress, whether it be on the shining stairs of heaven or through the pains of purgatorial fire, will be stimulated by the memories and prayers of those left behind.

"How can I cease to pray for thee? Somewhere
In God's great universe thou art to-day:
Can He not reach thee with His tender care?
Can He not hear me when for thee I pray?

What matters it to Him who holds within
The hollow of His hands all worlds, all space,
That thou art done with earthly pain and sin?
Somewhere within His ken thou hast a place.

Somewhere thou livest, and hast need of Him:
Somewhere thy soul sees higher heights to climb:
And somewhere still there may be valleys dim
That thou must pass to reach the hills sublime.

Then all the more, because thou canst not hear
Poor human words of blessing, will I pray,
O true brave heart! God bless thee, wheresoe'er
In God's great universe thou art to-day."*

* Jean Caroline Dorr.

VI

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

" . . . that apart from us they should not be made perfect."—Heb. xi. 40.

VI

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

If there is one article in the Creed concerning which the modern Church knows little or nothing it is "The Communion of Saints." It was first inserted as a protest, probably against an heretical sect that seceded from the Catholic Church in the early part of the fourth century. These schismatics asserted that they were the true church of Christ and all other Christians were worthy of excommunication. Against this arrogant position the early fathers very properly ruled that Christian believers were one, not by virtue of outward form, but because of inward holiness. Their view was that the Church was a brotherhood of those who owned allegiance to the spirit of Christ, and that all "the saints" were one family, irrespective of minor differences or geographical separation.

It was not long, however, before this clause became to be interpreted in a far wider sense. At first inserted to vindicate the doctrine of the communion of saints in this life, it gradually came to be extended to include communion between the living and the dead, the link between them being a

common loyalty to their Lord. When these early followers of Jesus celebrated the Eucharist they were conscious of a threefold spiritual fellowship, namely, with their risen Master, with one another, and with the blessed dead.

To dwell upon that picture is one of the most inspiring exercises permitted to the student of history. A tiny handful of people are gathered together surreptitiously in some underground den. Sentries are posted at the doors to give warning of the approach of a stranger. Against these men and women is directed the full force of the State. Only yesterday some of their number have been martyred. To-morrow, others may meet a like fate. Now they kneel and take the holy bread and sip the sacred wine, sustained in their Christian allegiance by a tremendous sense of the Presence of their Lord. Knowing that up and down the land there are other scattered groups of Jesus-worshippers, their hearts go out in love to these. And in addition, they feel conscious of the presence of the spirits of those who knelt with them at the holy table at the last eucharistic observance, but whose maimed bodies even now await burial. In the blessed fellowship of what is in very truth a "holy communion" the dead and the living are as one.

That picture belongs to the past. Nowadays we have lost the sense of the nearness of those immortal

spirits who have passed over the border line of death. As a consequence, the table of the Lord means less to the modern churchman than it did to these early disciples of Jesus. Ceremonies, rites, dogmas, controversies, obscure the spirit of fellowship that once was its central feature. Nobody, at any rate in the Protestant communions, goes to a sacramental observance to assure himself that the dead live. When we need convincing of the reality of the hereafter we prefer to visit a medium. That may be all very well in its way, but it is no substitute for the "communion of saints." In the early church the assurance of the reality of the life to come was given, not only through teaching or tradition, but through actual experience, and that not from outside, but from inside the Christian community.

Is it possible to restore that experience to the Church to-day? To do that would be an incalculable gain to Christianity. If the communion of saints could be put into practice, and not merely taught as a theory, or ignored altogether, as is too frequently the case, the Church would not have to mourn the loss of some of her members to spiritism. For if it be true that the dead live, as the Christian religion asserts, surely it ought to be something more than a pious hope that some day we shall see our loved ones again. The Jews in the

time of our Lord were as far advanced as that. "Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day."* Has Christianity no more to offer than this? The whole story of the raising of Lazarus is an answer to that question. Whatever may be its historic value its spiritual meaning is that He who is the resurrection and the life can call back Lazarus from the grave and thus restore a family fellowship that death had disturbed. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews rightly interprets the Christian experience of the early centuries when he declares:

"But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus. . . ."†

The communion of saints, then, ought to be a fact of experience, which those who love their Lord can enter into and enjoy.

Christianity has nothing whatever to say in respect to any large or general intercourse with the dead on any terms. The Church should always listen with respect to those men who are investigating scientifically in the realm of psychical research,

* John xi. 24. † Heb. xii. 22-24.

but her claim is not the same as theirs. She has no doctrine of communion with the dead, but of the communion of *saints*, which is a different matter. Her assertion is that if there exists between the living and the dead a real bond of Christian fellowship, then there are times and seasons when the dead and the living meet, and further, are conscious that they meet. If they have in common holy purposes and high ideals, if they are united in love for their Lord, then the living may realise, as a fact of experience, the presence of those who have passed over to the other side.

It follows, therefore, that before we may have any kind of communion with the saints, we must have communion with God. We have seen that communion with God is the possession of some quality in common with Him, such as a love of beauty, or a desire for truth, or a passion for goodness. To love the things that God loves is to touch His hand in the darkness, to reach out to Him amid the shadows. Sin, which is the great divider, not only cuts the soul off from fellowship with the divine, but spoils all other fellowships, particularly fellowship with those who live in the great unseen.

Any experience of communion with the saints, therefore, depends upon communion with God. Just as it is true that the nearer we get to God the more we understand heaven, so it is also true that the nearer we get to God the more vivid will be our

fellowship with those who have forded the river of death.

One reason why the practice of the communion of saints has fallen into disregard is that so little effort is made to come into touch with God. We live in a world of sham. We are afraid of reality. We take no pains to reach out to the Infinite. We do not take the spiritual forces of life with sufficient seriousness. If most of us put half the energy into laying up treasures in heaven which we put into laying up treasures upon the earth, all life would be transformed. If we were as anxious to keep clean in soul as we are in body, we should be recreated. If, instead of saying perfunctory prayers, consisting largely in asking God for some temporal blessing, we were content to follow the advice of Jesus and retire into an inner room and listen for the voice of God, something might happen. The curse of the present age is that it will talk. It will not listen. The message for this generation is: "Be still, and know that I am God."

Unless the spiritual faculties are trained, and a serious and deliberate attempt is made, in a practical way, to reach God, the unseen world will always be unreal and the dead seem a long way off. Spiritual truth cannot be received by unspiritual agents. It cannot be recognised as truth except by those whose spiritual natures are alert. The word of the Lord or the gift of the Holy Spirit can only come to those

who are prepared in some measure to receive divine revelation. As Paul said:

"The natural (literally 'psychical') man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged."*

To take the unseen world seriously, it is necessary to establish contact between ourselves and God, to be desperately anxious to touch reality, to refuse half-truths and facile fallacies. All this may be difficult, but it is necessary and it is worth while. "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off." A modern writer has suggested that the reference here is to business, that which lies to hand, that which the right hand has to do.† If this is correct, the inference is that it is worth while to sacrifice time and energy that is given to business for the sake of reaching out to that which is none the less real because it is unseen.

If man has an immortal soul, it is worth cultivating. If communion with God is possible, it is worth while taking pains to secure it. The man who takes the things of the spirit with sufficient seriousness, who in these matters is prepared to be

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

† "Just in the same way, if your business is a hindrance to a worthy life, at all costs be rid of it." From a paraphrase of the Sermon on the Mount in *The School of Jesus*, by G. R. H. Shafto.

sober and vigilant, is the man to whom the spirits of the dead will come. Those who live again in the world to come and who share the Christian ideals are not so remote that under certain conditions they find it impossible to renew intercourse with those who, like themselves, love God and are furthering the divine purpose as well as they are able.

Of the method of communication something may now be said. It is not physical, nor is the experience mediated through physical channels. It is spiritual and direct. In this important respect it differs from those communications that purport to come by the methods of the spiritist. Whether or no psychical experiences are valid is not the question here. These must be judged by other standards and investigated in a different manner. In the experience of the communion of saints the important questions are not whether it is possible to see and to hear the dead, but whether it is possible to be quite sure that they are present. Such clairvoyance or clairaudience as comes in the exercise of spiritual communion is itself spiritual and not physical. In the ordinary sense it is not psychical although it may be related to the psychical. That is not a vital question at the moment. We know that the dead are present in the same manner that we know all the great realities, namely, through the apprehension of spiritual faculties that go deeper even than those qualities that depend upon

he human reason. Not that such faculties are pposed to the reason. On the contrary, they must lways be checked and to an extent controlled by he intellectual attributes of the mind.

Miss Lily Dougall, the author of *Pro Christo t Ecclesia,* in discussing this subject in an luminating essay,* relates an experience that came o a woman who had lost her husband. One day, hen she was in the garden gathering flowers to y on his grave, she suddenly became conscious hat her husband was with her, only braver and ronger and more happy than she had ever known im. "How did you know he was there?" she was sked. The reply is significant:

I don't know how I knew—but I knew; and mes and times since I have known: and if you ant any proof that what I tell you is true, I should y: Apply the old test—look for the fruits! Look my children. Do you think the foolish, undisplined girl that I was could have trained and ught them as they have been trained and taught? hat I think is that whatever comfort you got rough your medium, I got a better form of mfort, for I found God and my husband too."*

Such experiences as these, though not often corded in print, might be multiplied indefinitely d would indeed be common to all Christians if ey were prepared to fulfil the conditions. They

* *Immortality,* edited by H. B. Streeter.

are all summed up in the communion of saints. They are based upon communion with God. They are realised through the quickening of latent spiritual faculties that sleep within us all. It is possible to scoff at them, and there are no physical phenomena like table tilting that can be produced in their defence. But if any man once passes through an experience like that narrated above, he knows that the dead live, with a knowledge that goes to the root of his being and that no idle scepticism can shake.

It may be said that this and similar experiences arise through the action of memory. By constantly dwelling upon some loved one who has passed into the great unseen, by recalling familiar gestures, words and phrases, an image is created in the mind that one day seems to take on life. Thought-forms, the result of subjective impressions, are born in our own consciousness, and being nurtured by hope and love eventually deceive us into believing that they are real. In Maeterlinck's play "The Blue Bird" there is a scene in which those who have passed away awake from sleep when they are remembered by the living. Can this be the true explanation after all? Is the communion of saints but a dream, made vivid by love? There is but one answer to that question, and if the answer is not sufficient for the sceptic, there is nothing for it but to leave him to his scepticism. What effect does

the communion of saints have upon the practical life? If it is based on delusion, we shall expect to find some disturbance of mental balance, some loss of concentration; a diminution of power and a disinclination to apply oneself to the practical affairs of life and to order its business aright. Delusions, fancies, dreams—"that way madness lies."

It is impossible to tabulate all the facts, but it is safe to say that those who believe most thoroughly in the practice of the communion of saints are not the least efficient of men. On the contrary, a right and proper exercise of the spiritual faculties invariably leads to an enhancement of the spiritual life, a quickening of the moral susceptibilities, and a "toning-up" of the entire manhood. The New Testament clearly proves that when the Apostles became conscious that Jesus was not dead but alive they became new men. In like manner, though in a lesser degree, when through spiritual communion we realise the presence of the holy dead, we become better men. If not, the experience is valueless. We must judge by the fruits. There is no other way, and by this standard the veridical nature of each act of communion stands or falls.

After all, no spiritual knowledge can be adequately demonstrated on mathematical lines. It has to be taken on trust and proved by the fruits it produces. The fellowship of love is on that high mystical plane that neither knows nor needs proof

in the scientific sense. But it is none the less real, and its results in life and conduct ultimately become apparent.

There is no reason why such knowledge should not be possessed by all. A price has to be paid, but it is not outside the reach of the poorest. Conditions have to be fulfilled, but they may be attained by the humblest. Such knowledge does not depend upon the possession of psychical qualities, but upon the cultivation of the spiritual life, upon the deepening of the communion that all men may have with God, upon the readiness which they display in their approach to the unseen. Once it was the common possession of the Christian Church. If she has lost it, it is because she has lost God. What the spiritist is seeking by methods that are indirect and mediate may be found by the Christian by methods that are direct and immediate. The whole secret is the secret of love. Those who love God may, if they will, have happy fellowship with others of like mind in the spirit world. We are bound up with one another. As the writer to the Hebrews suggests, our prayers and thoughts assist those who have gone before in their upward progress. "Apart from us they should not be made perfect."*

"When the hours of Day are numbered,
And the voices of the Night
Wake the better soul, that slumbered,
To a holy, calm delight;

* Heb. xi. 40.

Then the forms of the departed
Enter at the open door;
The beloved, the true-hearted,
Come to visit me once more;

O though oft depressed and lonely,
All my fears are laid aside,
If I but remember only
Such as these have lived and died!"*

* H. W. Longfellow, *Footsteps of Angels.*

VII

THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT

"For we shall all stand before the judgement seat of God."—Rom. xiv. 10.

VII

THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT

In dealing with the teaching of Jesus in regard to the life of the world to come, it is not possible to evade the problems raised by His references to a day of judgement. If the suggestions made in the previous chapters be adopted, the result at first sight would appear to conflict with the teaching of Scripture at this point.

The most important consideration in this connection is that the idea of a day of judgement was not originated by Jesus. It was one of the many forms of religious expression that He inherited from the Jews. It arose in the first instance in the belief which obtained in primitive Judaism that Jahveh, although the chief of gods, was not the only god, and that a day would dawn when He would assert His rights and overthrow all His enemies. Later on, under the influence of the ethical teaching of the prophets, the Jewish idea of God deepened and widened, and with it the conception of judgement.

In the time of our Lord the common belief was that soon or late an hour of destiny would strike when all the nations would be solemnly arraigned

before God and every single individual receive his reward, based upon the predominance of good or evil in his life. The righteous would be acquitted and the unrighteous condemned. It must not be forgotten, however, that "righteousness" was a term conveying at that time a connotation less moral than legal. It depended upon a man's relation to the Jewish law, and therefore the average Jew found it difficult to believe that any Gentile could escape condemnation in the day of judgement. Needless to say, this represented a considerable advance of thought on more primitive ideas, since God had now come to be thought of, not as one among others, but Alone, Supreme, Holy. But what kind of a God was He? Upon the answer to that question everything depended.

It requires very little insight to discern that the conception of God underlying the Jewish view of judgement in the time of Christ was based on the picture of an Oriental monarch. He dealt out justice according to the evidence brought before Him, honestly but despotically, fairly but with little regard for the fate of the condemned. Remembering the conditions of the time, this view of God was by no means a low one. Up to a point it is right to think of God as King. It must be admitted also that with all His limitations the Jewish Jahveh was considerably superior to some of the deities that

have been presented to the thought of the present age. The important consideration here, however, is that for the pictures of God that obtained in His own age, Jesus was not responsible. The form in which the justice of God was cast was not the work of His hands. It was the common inheritance of the Jewish race, in which He shared.

Instead of approaching these ideas from the standpoint of the destructive critic, and declaring that they were all wrong, our Lord accepted them for what they were worth and invested them with a new wealth of meaning. He took the imagery of His day and gave to it new interpretations. Building upon the truth that was there, He raised upon it a new edifice. His function was not to destroy but to fulfil. When He found that men were calling God a King or a Judge, He did not attempt to argue with them, but He bade them ask: "What kind of a King is He?" "What are the standards of His judgements?"

The answer that He gave to such questions as these was that God is not a monarch who does as He wills for His own pleasure, but a heavenly Father who loves His children with an infinite tenderness and will never cease to love them. God is not a Judge who acquits the children of Abraham and condemns the rest, but one whose standard of judgement is holy love. Into the Eastern idea of a

court of justice, into the Jewish conception of a day of judgement, Jesus introduced entirely new moral standards. He showed that a man's destiny was settled, not by his relation to Abraham, but by his relation to God and his fellows. Not even those who called Him "Lord" were assured of an entrance into God's kingdom, but rather those who did the will of God.

This treatment of current ideas was quite in harmony with Christ's general methods. He made use of forms of speech and modes of thought that were common to His time. What else could He have done? Were He to come again in the flesh now, His language would be that of the twentieth century, just as two thousand years ago it was that of the first century. It is vital to insist upon this, because it follows that the form in which judgement is expressed is of very little importance. Jesus did not invent it. He used it because it was there, and it is difficult to imagine what other course He could have adopted. What is of importance is Christ's standard of judgement, the moral values upon which He insisted, and the quality and character of the God who rules over all.

It is not without importance also to notice that the expression "Day of Judgement" is not found in the Synoptic Gospels, except in Matthew, whose record is obviously written from a Jewish standpoint and bears a stronger Jewish imprint than any

of the others. It may be, therefore, that if we could get back to the actual expressions and phrases used by Jesus we should discover that they were less Jewish in form than may appear at first sight. It is fair to assume that He laid little stress upon the manner of judgement. With Him its spirit is the all-important consideration.

Idle speculations about the date of the end of the world and foolish questions as to the external accompaniments of judgement are therefore of no consequence at all. It is folly even to discuss them. That which matters above all else is the quality of men's lives. Are they governed by love or by self-interest? Are they in touch with God or separated from Him by sin? Those are the vital factors in the case, and they will prove to be decisive in the day of the Lord, whenever it may come and whatever form it may take.

The principles of judgement upon which Jesus laid emphasis may be simply stated. The first is the principle of separation. He looked forward to a period of crisis when good and evil would be finally separated. As the world is constituted at present, right and wrong are intermixed. Like the wheat and the tares they grow together. Why that should be so we do not know. Jesus ignored the whole problem, important as it may seem to us. But He did insist upon the fact that some day the harvest will come, and then wheat and tares will

grow together no longer. That is always true, nationally and individually. A nation which pursues an evil policy may cover it over with much that is good, but it will have to face the inevitable crisis when the evil will be exposed and sharply distinguished from the good. A man who allows a place in his nature to sin will have to reckon with a principle that will bring him to book. However complicated civilisation may become, some day it will straighten itself out into a direct issue between the right and the wrong.

The second principle is revelation. To Jesus death was the great revealer. Every man when he steps out into the unknown will be shown up for what he is. Here we deceive ourselves and one another. There we shall be stripped of every subterfuge and clothed in character alone. Many of our successes here will be counted as failures there. Many of our failures here will be accounted triumphs there. The first shall be last and the last first, simply because the standards of the world are not always the standards of God. We do not think as He thinks. Jesus pointed this out again and again. In the life of the world to come an evil mind will have an evil environment and a pure mind a pure environment. The judgements of God decree that Dives will lose his purple and Lazarus his rags. Each will be conditioned by the quality of his life.

If the parable of judgement attributed to our Lord by Matthew is explored for its real meaning, surely this principle of revelation becomes clear:

"Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."*

That is to say, those who are in communion with God through the spirit of love find an environment suitable to their spiritual necessities. Love being in their hearts, henceforth they are to be conditioned by love.

"Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels."†

That is to say, like goes to like. An evil and unloving soul will find an evil and unloving environment.

The day of judgement, therefore, is at once a separation and a revelation. It divides the evil from the good. It shows man as he really is and not as he seems to be. It creates a harmony between the quality and the condition of life. Into that judgement we shall all come. To use the language of Christ's own day: "We shall all stand before the judgement seat of God."

* Matt. xxv. 34. † Matt. xxv. 41.

Having regard to the teaching in the Matthean parable of judgement quoted above, and similar passages in the New Testament, it is generally assumed that there is no escape from the conclusion that once the judgement has been given it is fixed and irrevocable. But can we be quite so certain on this question? There is little doubt that the conclusions of modern scholars are correct when they affirm that what Matthew has recorded is part of a Jewish apocalypse which has become interwoven with the text in such fashion as to render it exceedingly difficult to discover how much or how little is actually attributable to our Lord Himself. That the parable was given by Him in the actual words recorded in the first Gospel is more than doubtful. But even if we take it exactly as it stands, there is nothing to shut out the view that the last word has not been spoken in regard to the doom of the wicked.

If in the after life the quality of the soul improves, the nature of the environment must improve with it. Who can dare to say that such improvement is impossible? Is it entirely inconceivable that the shock of being "found out" should not lead to a desire for something better? And if so, will the God that Jesus revealed keep the soul back for ever? It cannot be. God must love all souls that He has created, even those who have separated themselves from Him. He needs must sorrow when

hey suffer. He cannot rest content whilst the prodigals are away from home. The gulf may be wide, but not too wide for love finally to bridge. The way may be rough, but it is surely not God who will render it impassable. The choice may be difficult, but God will not make it impossible. As has already been suggested, in theory we may perhaps assume that a soul may hold out against the love of the Father for ever, since free-will is inherent in the constitution of humanity. But in practice we can scarcely believe it to be possible. To put it in another way, free-will, which is perhaps the greatest of God's gifts to men, will not be withdrawn, even at the cost of pain to our heavenly Father. But will this beneficent gift ultimately contribute to man's eternal destruction? It is almost beyond belief.

Neither should we forget that judgement need not be altogether postponed to the future. To those in touch with God here His voice pronounces a benediction. For the kingdom prepared for those who love Him is not in the stars. It is in the hearts of men. In the last analysis there is no real distinction between justice and love. There is no perfect justice divorced from the element of love. There can be no real love unless it is just. The distinction we draw between the two is theoretical and academic. In reality they are one. Therefore we need not fear the judgements of God, as they are

revealed to us day by day, if we do not outrage and violate His love. Death deepens and confirms a process that is going on all the time. Divine love, which would not be love unless it were constantly manifesting the principles of judgement, is the one final certainty of the universe. It is the rock upon which all human life and thought are built. It is the solution to the riddle of the universe.

"Where have you been, my brother?
For I missed you from the street:—
'I've been away, a night and a day,
At the great God's judgement seat.'

And what did you find, my brother,
When your judging there was done?—
'Weeds in my garden, dust in my doors,
And my roses dead in the sun.

But the lesson I brought back with me,
Like silence, from above;
On the judgement throne, there is room alone
For the Lord whose name is love.'"

VIII

THE CHALLENGE OF TO-DAY

"And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead."—LUKE xvi. 31.

VIII

THE CHALLENGE OF TO-DAY

We have now arrived at a stage when it may be possible to come to a clearer understanding of the nature of immortality, if not actually to define it. We have seen that it is not the prolongation of existence, but the apprehension of life. The world to come is with us now, if we will awaken to it.

> "It is not something yet to be revealed—
> The everlasting life—'tis here and now,
> Passing unseen because our eyes are sealed
> With blindness for the pride upon our brow."*

When death comes, all that is spiritual in our nature will be set free. The mists of earth will no longer obscure the vision. The dream in which we pass our present existence will cease and we shall awaken to reality.

> ". . . He is not dead, he doth not sleep—
> He hath awakened from the dream of life."†

The realisation of this truth in practice would make all the difference to the lives of most of us. It

* Percy C. Ainsworth, *Poems and Sonnets.*
† P. B. Shelley, *Adonais.*

would give us a point of view which would not onl
be new, but which would enable us to perceiv
unsuspected glories in the commonplace. W
should escape from the spiritual *ennui* from whic
we all to some extent suffer. The angle of ou
vision would alter, as it did for Saul Kane:

> "O glory of the lighted mind,
> How dead I'd been, how dumb, how blind,
> The station brook, to my new eyes
> Was babbling out of Paradise;
> The waters rushing from the rain
> Were singing Christ has risen again."*

On the other hand, if no perception of immo
tality dawns upon the minds of men, then, to quot
the words of the parable, "Neither will they b
persuaded if one rise from the dead."† In othe
words, the man who does not find heaven here
unlikely to discover it hereafter. Unless the ne
Jerusalem live in our hearts in this life, we shall n
readily behold its glories in the next.

The challenge which this age makes to those wh
accept the truth of immortality, therefore, is th
challenge of materialism. It was a danger in th
days of Jesus. He constantly warned His heare
against it. He told them not to be unduly co
cerned even about such necessary things as foo
and clothing. He said that if they would only se

* John Masefield, *The Everlasting Mercy.*
† Luke xvi. 31.

first the kingdom of God all else would be added thereto. Dives was a man who had succumbed to materialism. He had neglected the things that matter. So far as we can judge, he was neither vicious nor immoral. He simply lacked vision and he paid the inevitable price.

If materialism was a danger in the days of our Lord, surely in the complication of civilisation to which we have been brought it is a thousand times more to be feared now. Not that materialism is an intellectual danger. The days when science and philosophy were fast in its grip are over. Men see now that the universe cannot be expressed satisfactorily in terms of matter and motion. The purest and noblest things of life are no longer reduced to something that can be contained in a test-tube. The period of intellectual materialism has at last come to an end.

None the less, its results remain in the practical materialism that dominates the habits of numbers of ordinary people. The callous disregard of beauty, truth and goodness in the affairs of men, the blind folly that trusts in force, the unspiritual temper manifested in our social, political and individual life, all these menace the fact of immortality and constitute the real opposition to the life immortal. The spirit that puts the things of the flesh before the things of the spirit, that thinks in terms of money rather than in terms of personality, that

worships Mammon instead of God, is the foe of eternal life.

It is a spirit that has crept into the Church and threatened the existence of religion itself. The man who refuses to accept conventional ideas of heaven or hell, or who insists that men ought to do right because it is right and not for the sake of future reward is less materialistic than some of those who are so eager to contend for the ancient forms of Christian faith. It is folly for the Church to make enemies of sincere and honest doubters. Her real foe is materialism; and if it is to be finally defeated all her available forces will have to be mobilised against it.

Nervous Christians need fear no man who loves truth. Sincere and honest criticism of the standards of the faith harm no one. The enemy of Christianity is not science, nor philosophy, nor intelligent investigation. Still less is it such mystical speculations as appear in theosophy or Christian Science or such practices as are associated with psychical research. It is materialism.

Materialism is not money. A poor man may be just as materialistic as a rich man. It is true that the temptations of the rich are tenfold greater in their intensity. Jesus declared that from the standpoint of the kingdom of God it is a terrible thing to be able to command large resources of any form of

wealth. But it is possible to be as materialistic with little money as with much. If the value of wealth be overestimated, if any trickery be employed to possess it, in short, if the god of this life be the object of worship and adoration, then a man is imperilling his immortal soul, whatever be the social sphere in which he moves.

Materialism is the common foe of all mankind. It will injure the ideals of Labour as surely as it will menace Capital. A greedy and avaricious spirit is always wrong, whether it be manifested by master or man. Tyranny, which is the chief weapon of the materialist, is an evil thing, whether exercised by an individual acting alone or by a federation of individuals acting together. In practice the latter case is usually worse, because a group or combination of men can sometimes be guilty of actions that none of its members would perform singly. The profiteer and the tyrant live on materialism. They degrade themselves and others with them. In a spiritual order they would be an impossibility.

The reassertion of a lofty idealism, the reaffirmation of the Christian doctrine of immortality, the proclamation of the full message of Jesus, therefore, are always necessary, and never more so than now. For the central feature of Christ's teaching is that human life is not primarily dependent upon

the things of time and sense, but upon that which is spiritual, upon that unseen world which it is worth while losing all else to attain.

It must be clearly understood that Christian teaching does not imply the utter worthlessness of the material world. To make such a sweeping assertion is to fall into the old Manichean heresy that matter is necessarily and of itself evil. The early Church properly condemned this form of teaching, which has nevertheless reappeared in every subsequent age. Matter is not inherently evil. It is, or ought to be, the instrument of mind. Its proper function is to serve the highest interests of the soul. "Moses and the prophets" ought always to be leading men to God. The life and history of mankind are crowded with intimations of the divine. The fundamental mistake of the materialist is that he cannot find God therein. He is always asking for supernatural demonstrations. "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." The fact is, the sign is there all the time, but men are too blind to perceive it or to realise its significance.

The present world is full of God. Tokens of immortality abound on every hand. He who is prepared to approach the things "that are seen" sacramentally, will discover for himself that the bush is aflame with spiritual presences. But the materialistic demand for physical displays of divine

power can never be met for the reason that if and when they came they would be unheeded. If an angel should come from heaven, the materialist would be the first to cry out that it was a fraud or a delusion or the work of the devil.

Sir Oliver Lodge has a striking paragraph in one of his books that is worthy of serious consideration by every lover of the truth:

"Let us be as cautious and critical, aye, and as sceptical as we like, but let us be patient and persevering and fair. Do not let us start with a preconceived notion of what is possible and what is impossible in this almost unexplored universe. Let us only be willing to learn and be guided by facts and not by dogmas, and gradually the truth will permeate our understanding. . . ."*

That is the correct attitude for all those who worship the God of Truth. It is not only scientific but religious.

The teaching of Jesus is of especial value here because He did not despise this present life. He pointed out that properly used it leads to the larger life that is behind the things we see. He enjoyed nature, both human and what we call inanimate. Yet He led the the thoughts of men to an appreciation of a world of Reality that interfused all existing things. What above all else

* Sir Oliver Lodge, *Raymond.*

commands the respect of the human mind is His doctrine of the fatherhood of God, the full implications of which are seen in His cross. We learn there that God is with us in the storm, that the sins and sorrows of His children are felt by Him; that in a very real sense He is sharing the life of His children. Above all, the cross of Christ denies and denounces the lie that this life is all. He who has courage, therefore, to follow in the footsteps of Jesus will oppose the materialism of his age in the sure confidence that the way of the cross is the way of light, and that after Calvary there is always the resurrection.

IX

CONCLUSION

"I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly."—JOHN X. 10.

IX

CONCLUSION

"If a man die, shall he live again?" With that question we began our enquiry. Are we now in a position to give a reply? It is proposed here to summarise briefly the findings of the preceding chapters in the hope that they may furnish a basis for a reasonable belief in the hereafter.

We discovered at the outset that there are at least four preliminary considerations that have an important bearing upon the whole problem. They may be stated thus:

1. There has always existed a universal desire for immortality, in spite of all attempts to explain it away or to account for its persistence. It cannot be eradicated from human nature, and it finds constant expression in many and diverse forms.

2. There also exists a growing sense of dissatisfaction with this present life. Man is constantly reaching out after reality. He is not content with his present existence. He never attains his heart's desire, especially in the higher realms of goodness, truth and beauty.

3. A remarkable change has come over modern scientific and philosophic thought. Once material-

istic in its outlook it is now tending more and more in the other direction. The spiritual is assuming prominence in every department of life.

4. Recent psychological enquiry, especially in the realm of psychical research, has tended to confirm the independence of mind and matter. The possibility of the survival of human personality after death is no longer regarded as irrational.

It must be admitted that these considerations do not of themselves prove immortality. Taken together, they may seem to indicate a moderately strong *primâ facie* case, but that is all. They must be given due weight, and if on other grounds an argument for the reality of the life to come can be sustained, they will have an important bearing upon it. Beyond this we have no right to go.

The real proof of immortality is to be found in religion. It is primarily a religious question, and because Christianity claims to meet all man's needs and requirements in this matter it has been thought sufficient to limit the enquiry to this field. Christianity is based upon the life and teaching and person of Jesus. All its conclusions depend upon Him. It is obvious, therefore, that what He said and did and was must be our chief concern.

Of all the contributions that were made by Jesus to the thinking of mankind, by far the most important was His revelation of the fatherhood of God. The Christian doctrine of immortality begins

and ends there. God is our Father. It is therefore inconceivable that He should allow the destruction of human personality at death. Any other alternative would be so serious a reflection upon the divine fatherhood that it would lose its meaning. We are on sure ground here. If this is not true, it involves a denial of the most characteristic and essential factor in the life and ministry of Jesus.

It is when we come to the various attempts to work out the implications of this line of teaching that difficulties arise. In the first place, symbolic words and phrases have been interpreted literally and their original meaning distorted. The world to come has been relegated to the skies and much of the beauty of Christ's teaching thereby lost. Eternal life has come to be conceived as a form of existence in the hereafter instead of a present possession. It has therefore been thought desirable to emphasise the underlying principles of Christian doctrine and so far as possible to distinguish between these and the forms in which they may have been expressed.

The three words to which especial attention has been given are "Heaven," "Hell" and "Purgatory," the first two being scriptural, the third having come into being later and representing an attempt on the part of the Roman Church to deal with the problem suggested by the existence of a large class of persons whose spiritual condition and

experience would seem to qualify them for a state hereafter to which expressions like heaven and hell do not appear to be appropriate. An endeavour has been made to define these words, not in terms of place, but of quality of life. This would appear to be more in harmony with the teaching of the New Testament. Moreover, due regard has been given to the principle of progress. This cannot be eliminated if personality is to survive the experience of death and if God is still to remain the Father of all human souls. We have found it necessary to reject the Roman doctrine of purgatory. But the suggestion that it makes of moral purification in the hereafter and of progress to a higher state of being is one that is so true to the thought of Jesus that it cannot be left out of account. The final test in this, as in all such matters, is its relation to the fatherhood of God. We dare deny nothing that rests upon this. We dare affirm nothing that denies it. Such subsidiary questions as prayers for the dead should be dealt with from this point of view. They will then fall into their rightful place and be decided accordingly.

The principle of judgement is one that runs throughout the whole of Christ's teaching. Its form is of little consequence. The realisation of its inevitability is vital. It is something more than a single act. It is a process, culminating in the final triumph of good over evil.

By successive stages, therefore, it has been possible to climb up to a conception of immortality that is not only in harmony with the teaching of Jesus, but is free from the materialistic accompaniments that have proved repellent to many earnest and truth-loving souls. Immortality is life; it is communion with God; it is the realisation of the unseen; it is the apprehension of reality. The gospel of Jesus not only invites men and women to participate in all this, but indicates the way in which it may be accomplished. The Master Himself travelled along that way. It needs faith and it implies sacrifice. But its rewards are a sense of the divine presence here and a fuller realisation of that presence hereafter; a progress towards reality, begun in this life, and continued in the next; and, above all, a joyous fellowship with God and all those who love Him, not excepting some who have passed over to the other side.

The great enemy of immortality is materialism. To defeat this the Church needs all her weapons and all her faith. Her friends are all those who love beauty, goodness and truth. Her foes are those who care for none of these things. To come into closer touch with her friends and to show her foes a "more excellent way" should be her supreme task. It is worthy of her finest enthusiasm and her utmost endeavour. In proportion as she remains loyal to the essential principles of Jesus she will

win. For when all has been said and done, there is something about the Master that appeals to the purest and best instincts of men. When He is lifted up, He draws all men unto Himself. He answers to human need, He satisfies human desire. He not only assures men that death is not the end, but He imparts life. "If a man die, shall he live again?" The words of Jesus are the only possible reply: "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly."

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